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SAGE OF SAKURI

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SAGE OF SAKURI

PART I

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BY

B. V. NARASIMHA SWAMI

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BANARAS

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OPINIONS.

Sage of Sakuri is a fascinating record; the author has taken considerable pains to give the public an authentic and useful account. He has visited most of the places mentioned, also examined records. The present work is a biography, written with a critical eye. The greatness of Upasani Baba lies in the spiritual sphere, the help that he gives to aspirants or devotees. The biography is very interesting and also instructive and useful to spiritual aspirants.—*Sunday Times, Madras.*

A short life-sketch of one of the glorious spiritual sons of Mother India. Sri Upasani Baba Maharaj—the great Saint of the Bombay Presidency, a blazing fire of Vairagya in the midst of *Kamini Kanchana* whose mission is "to fish out men from their worldly turmoils and set them on their proper religious path." His life affords us an example of how a life of renunciation and supreme spirituality can be lived even in the midst of society and worldly environments......... written in a chaste and simple style.........*The Hindu Mind, Kumbakonam.*

A delightful life-sketch of a sage......All spiritually inclined will find much food for thought in this well-written life.—*Scholar, Palghat.*

Indians are greatly indebted to B. V. N. Swami for publishing a verified biography of this great personage.—*Swadeshamitran, Madras.*

Sage of Sakuri: I read with much interest.

SIR S. RADHAKRISHNAN,
Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University.

I find the narrative interesting and inspiring.

DEWAN BAHADUR V. K. RAMANUJACHARIAR,
Ex-M.L.C. & Retd. Revenue Board Secry.

The book gives a useful study and a delightful reading......Upasani Babaji is a veritable superman to have created such a deep faith and devotion among a wide circle......must indeed be a mighty *siddha.*

SRI SUDDHANANDA BHARATI;
Aurobindo Ghose Asram, Pondicherry.

A close study of the lives of great saints reveals the fact that the glory attributed to them is purely due to the grace of their Masters. Many are striving but a few are chosen. And the Master chooses, whom He likes. Sri Upasani Maharaj is undoubtedly one of such favoured few, chosen by his great master, Sri Sai Baba.

The language of the book is easy. The experiences of the saint will no doubt be a guide to spiritual aspirants.—*The Vision.*

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The Sage of Sakuri is the well-known saint, Sri Upasani Baba. The author has rendered a great service to seekers of truth, by collecting all the interesting and inspiring experiences of this sage, in this book form.— *Peace.*

The language, the devotion and the attitude of mind to truth-seekings are all combined here and hence the book is fraught with life-giving and life-inspiring words.—*The Vaitarani Office, Cuttack.*

Sage of Sakuri by Mr. B. V. Narasimha Swami, the author of *Self-Realisation.*

The long period of intense Sadhana Upasani Baba underwent as a disciple of his Moslem Guru, Sai Baba cannot but strike us with admiration.—*Vedanta Kesari.*

It is so well-written, that even the common people will find it interesting and pleasant, as the style is vigorous with conspicuous adherence to truth and authentic records. Even a sceptic, if he would only read this biography, will be profited.—*Madhavananda Saraswathi.*

An interesting and instructive biography of Sri Upasani Baba who distributed much spiritual food among his devotees. A vivid example of how life of *Vairagya* (renunciation) can be safely lived in the midst of worldly environments.—*Kashmir Times.*

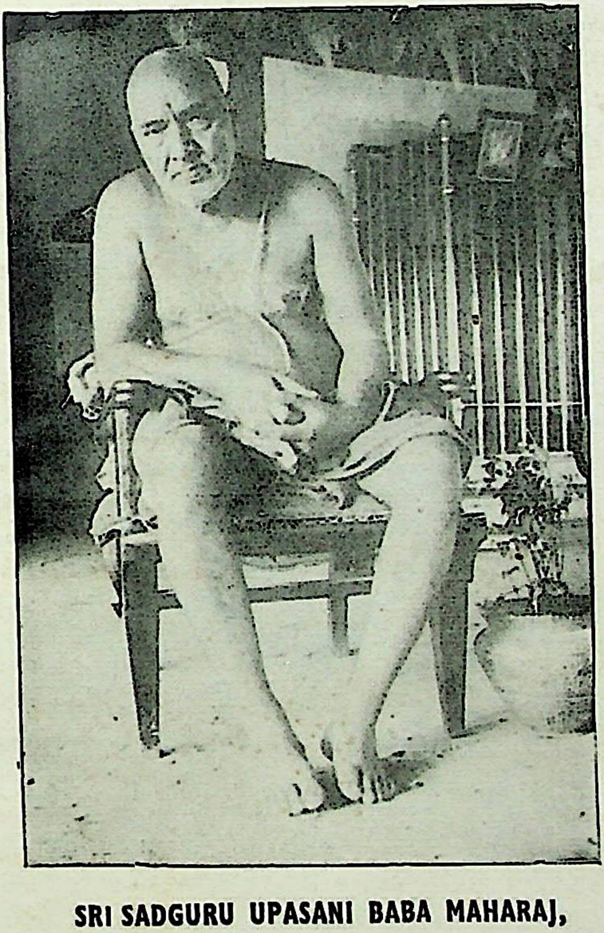
The biography is very interesting and also instructive and useful to spiritual aspirants.—*The East and West Trade Developer.*

This is a well-written life of one of the great men of South India, he whom the world knows as Sri Upasani Baba.—*The Hindu.*

A well-written book, describing in a simple style how a youth developed his mind for the highest intuition. The main lesson of the book is that 'Faith Saves'. "Few can excel him—the Sage of Sakuri, in training and carrying one on to God or Brahman, through the paths of devotion, good works, etc."—*The Young Builder.*

During recent times, Maharashtra has produced two great Hindu saints in the person of Siddharudha and Upasani Baba, the subject of the life-sketch before us. The latter, a veritable Jina in enduring privation, has created an atmosphere of supreme faith and emotional worship in which the mind can ripen for *Sadgati*. The author who has a rare gift of language and a facile pen.........The account of the early life and struggles of Sri Upasani Baba, his austerities, trials and privations, we have read with absorbing interest. A noteworthy feature of Upasani Baba's teachings is the adoration of the mother in woman, and the realisation in her, the divine, as the universal energy. — *Dharmarajya.*

The life......at once interesting and exalting...... clear and impartial outlook......book so inspiring and so elevating......—*The Hindu Organ, Jaffna.*



SRI SADGURU UPASANI BABA MAHARAJ,
(In front of his Pinjra or Cage).

SAGE OF SAKURI

PART I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A SAINT AND HIS FAMILY

Sakuri is a small hamlet in the Ahmednagar District of the Bombay Presidency. Twenty years ago it was hardly known to even a few. A saint took up his residence there in 1917 A.D. and since then his fame began to spread, and now thousands are making their pilgrimage to that place. He lived at first in a tiny thatched hut on a cremation ground, and there was no accomodation for visitors. But thanks to the enthusiasm of the devotees flocking to him, the hut has given place to a substantial building with an upper storey and a princely gate; and a grand temple of Datta, two spacious "Dharmashalas" or guest-houses and other buildings have sprung up within the last ten years, thus converting the quondam cremation ground into a miniature township. What happens when he leaves this village on his tours is worthy of note. In 1930 he visited Bombay and stayed at the house of Seth Govinddas Banathwalla at Walkeshwar. Crowds at once poured in to take his *darśan.* One after another in a continuous stream, they came quickly, offered him flowers, &c., placed their forehead on his feet and immediately moved away. This ceremony which began at 1 P.M. went on without break or intermission till 9 P.M.; and the number of those who took *darsan* must evidently be some thousands. One would naturally inquire who this saint is, wherein his greatness lies, why people flocked to him in thousands, and what benefits they have derived and can still derive from approaching him. Though it is not possible to give full and exhaustive answers to the above questions, a modest attempt is made in this humble brochure to enable the reader to get some grasp of the subject and answer the questions for himself.

Kashinath Govind Upasani Sastri, or "Sri Upasani Baba Maharaj,"—for such is the name of that saint—is a Maharashtra Brahmin and comes of a family reputed for its piety, learning, austerities and other virtues. Its members have earned their living by serving as family priests to the villagers and by reading out and explaining the sacred legends known as *puranas,* etc. Satana, in the district of Nasik, has been their abode; and at the time of the birth of Kashinath, the family was rather poor.

Kashinath lived with his grandfather, Gopala Sastri, till his twenty-second year at Satana, while his father, Govinda Sastri, was mostly living away at Dhulia where he toiled hard for his bread as a "fee clerk," *i.e.*, copyist in the Civil Court and devoted his leisure to the pursuit of Astrology and Mathematics, in both of which he attained high proficiency evidenced by the works he wrote on Horoloy and Astrology. Gopala Sastri wrote (at the advanced age of 69) devotional poetry, singing the praise of Uddhava (to whose Mutt he and his family belonged) and the ecstatic love and worship of Krishna which was at once the pride and glory of Uddhava's line. But even during his earlier years, the fame of his learning and probity had become so great that, on the invitation of the Baroda Maharaja, he became one of his chief advisers in estimating the merit of the *literati*, that flocked to that ruler seeking recognition, titles, diplomas, and more substantial rewards. Later when a prince came to occupy the *Gadi*, who paid little heed to righteousness or principle, Sastri preferring principle to mere pomp and power or even emoluments, retired from Baroda to resume his obscure but godly life at Satana, as a village priest. There he attended unostentatiously to the strict discharge of his six Brahmanical duties or functions—studying and imparting the Vedas, performing and helping others to perform holy rites (*Yajnas*), receiving and giving charity. A few poor guests would almost daily turn up to share his hospitality, and about eight or ten boys would daily sit at his feet to learn the Vedas, Mantras, Ritual, Sanskrit grammar and literature, and receive the same attention at his hands as his own grandsons. These pupils imbibed from their master, not merely oral lessons but also, what was of greater value, the lofty principles that shown in his conduct such as generosity, impartiality, rectitude, meekness, humility, forgiveness, contentment, sincerity, truthfulness, full faith in the holy writ and traditional lore, strict obedience to the word of elders, and scrupulous adherence to ancient and orthodox usages. Any observer of the life of Sri Upasani Maharaj would be struck with the extent to which the principles and example of his grandfather have penetrated into and moulded his ideas, activities and even his very nature, thus bringing great credit and even glory to the whole family and rendering signal service to the community and country.

Kashinath is the second of five sons. His elder brother, Balakrishna Sastri, a great Sanskrit scholar, has been an examiner for the Master of Arts Degree in that language in the Bombay University, and is still the final judge on matters of ethics (*Dharma*) to whom some Indian Princes (*Rajas*) refer questions arising in their States. Ever since his youth he is known as "Madhu Sastri", *i.e.*, the "Honey" Sastri, on account of his excellent heart, unfailing good temper, genial smile, bland manner and suavity of speech.

CHAPTER II

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD

Kashinath was born on the 5th May 1870, invested with sacred thread in his eighth year, and admitted thereafter into a vernacular elementary school which he attended for three years. One day his teacher Ghrapure brutally caned him on his bare body, raising several weals all over. Roaring with pain, the boy fled home with rage and disgust and never attended the school again, His previous disregard for learning was, if anything, only intensified by this experience and thereafter crystalised into a settled doctrine with him that learning had little value or importance. Though he nominally attended some lessons taught at home by his elders, he never cared for education, which term conveyed to him only the cramming of the head with all sorts of intellectual stuff for the purpose of bread-winning. And as he developed very early in his youth strong views on the subject of bread and bread winning, it is no wonder that even after he finished his teens, he was too ill-equipped to be fit for any of the vocations for which his grandfather successfully coached up so many of his fellow-students and contemporaries.

In the matter of his physical constitution, he had inherited a strong and hardy frame, afflicted however with a tendency to constipation and piles, intensified by the frequent liberties he took with it. He was not content with merely regarding the body as a "brother ass" (to use the phrase of St. Francis of Assissi) and imposing heavy obligations on it, *e. g.*, of enduring frequent fasts and of swallowing Margosa leaf paste and sand sauce which a well-meaning but crotchety admirer named Visu Nana administered to him during his boyhood. He went further and persistently regarded it as his enemy. "Look at the body," he would say; "It fattens upon our labours and forces us to endure the drudgery and pain of education and pursuit of a calling for its sake." A neighbouring epicure who lived in high style and devoted his wealth and energy to the preparation and consumption of the choicest dishes and viands every day, got an attack of cholera, vomitted undigested the dainties he had stuffed in—not wisely but too well, and left this world with all its dainties. This formed the stock illustration with which Kashinath used to support his doctrines, even in the presence of elders. "Look at this striking instance," cried the boy; with the vehemence of Max Nordau, "the ungrateful, nay perfidious wretch of a body fed with such assiduous care suddenly deserted him and left him in the lurch. Is not the body then our enemy, masquerading as a friend?" The elders who listened to such talk did not, as Meneneus Agrippa of old on a famous occasion, narrate the story of "The belly and the members"; neither did they chide him nor take any serious notice of his views. Knowing that the froth and mud of the early freshes soon settle and leave the spring clear as crystal, and hoping that similarly the needed correction of his views would come as a matter of course, they merely smiled at his precocious audacity in stepping on the first rung of the ladder of spiritual *sadhana*, by disassociating the self from its sheath and escaping the almost universal delusion that the body is the self. Accustomed always to carry his hobbies to exterme lengths, the unchecked Kashinath naturally tumbled into many pit-falls, and even risked his life; and he would certainly have lost life and limb but for an overwatching Providence that reserved him for a nobler end. One of these risks may here be instanced.

One day young Kashinath was watching a rapidly rotating wheel used for the purpose of irrigation. There was a narrow slit in the centre of its hub, at a height he could easily reach. Suddenly the thought flashed into him that it would be fine fun to thrust "this finger," which of course was not himself, into the orifice and watch the result. To think was to act. At once his fingertip was thrust in, and he was promptly rewarded with sharp pain, the immediate result of which was the instant and involuntary withdrawal of the suffering member. As for any lasting results, there was only an alteration in the line of the aforesaid digit into a permanent curvature, but no alteration in the line of his thoughts and doctrines. Young Kashinath always held to his guns. Now, of course, the Maharaj smiles at the crudity of his early researches into the body-self relations and says that though the body with all its powers, peculiarities and potentialities is the visible embodiment of man's past actions (*Purva Karma*) which he has now to work out and overcome. Conquest comes not by hating the body but by using it properly to the very end. He recognizes the important part played by the body in sustaining and developing the notion of one's self, even in expanding that notion till all bodies in the Universe become one's body, and all selves become one's self, *i.e.*, the Self. He also recognises the merit of well directed learning in developing and preparing the mind for higher intuition, though the highest intuition, *i.e.*, God-Realisation does not dawn on one unless he forgets all he ever learnt and until the mind itself disappears along with the last traces of learning (*Vidya Vasana*). But in his early years and adolescence, nothing could dislodge him from his fixed ideas that the body was man's enemy and that all learning was for the benefit of the body and not of the self.

With such notions, Kashinath was attracted much more to the weird, and the supernatural side of his grandfather's teachings than to their practical and vocational side. Besides the daily routine of bath and *Sandhya* *i.e.*, prayer, he took to the worship of the domestic images of Sri Rama and Maruti. In his grandfather's frequent readings from the sacred epics and legends, *i.e.*, Ramayana,–Mahabharata and Puranas, what caught his youthful fancy was the immense, nay the limitless power of Mantras and austerities (Tapas), the astounding fact that an ordinary person like Dhruva or Visvamitra without special equipment could run up to remote solitudes and by *Japa* and *Pranayama*, *i.e.*, repetition of sacred syllables, retention of breath and prolonged fasts, arrive at a height of power which the highest gods were forced to recognise and bow to. Use of *mantras* and rites for the cure of all human ills was a matter of daily occurrence in his own house and in the village. For instance, when he was afflicted with terrific dreams in which he beheld himself scorched in a blazing sacrificial fire (in a *homa kunda*) and beaten mercilessly by sturdy ruffians, he obtained quick relief by pronouncing a *mantra* prescribed by his grandfather. Kashinath practised postures and breath control (*Asan* and *Pranayama*) and *mantra japa*, *i. e.*, repetition of sacred syllables, Vishnu Sahasranama, Sapthasati, etc., at home or in the burning ground, by night and day. Beyond and as a climax of all these, there was a growing yearning in his heart that his life should reach its grand culmination in the performance of notable *Tapas* on some lonely hill or in some dense forest; and upon such matters, he would ruminate in sullen seclusion even at home, while his fellows were vigorously studying or enjoying their sports and games.

A youth with such ideas and tendencies was naturally looked upon by the family as its "wooden spoon" and an incorrigible lad, by outsiders as a hopelessly *tamasic* lad. They would even express among themselves their wonder how "such a goose was born in a family of swans," how one with so little taste for learning* came into a line noted for producing great scholars in each generation. Few however dared, and certainly the younger people dared not approach and express their views to Kashinath, as he had a giant's strength and would use it, if provoked. All the same, he was painfully conscious that he was held all round in low esteem and that from the world's standpoint he was really "good for nothing," *i e.*, unable to enter any vocation. What with this consciousness and his seclusion, with his fasts and tendency to disease, Kashinath was even in the spring time of youth a sorrow-laden soul.

---

*This was but a passing phase. Later he has produced many volumes of his lectures, &c.

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE AND FLIGHT FROM HOME

If boyhood or the period of *Brahmacharya* that bestows its largesses of learning and joy on others passed away conferring little of either on Kashinath, would not matrimony (*Grihasthasrama*) at least prove more benignant? To many a youth leading a comparatively dull life, the love of woman has come as an elevating and transforming influence and the early years of nuptial bliss with the girl of his choice have turned this harsh earth into the golden realm of Paradise. But young Kashinath'e fate appears to have been very different. When he was just fourteen, a junior member in a large joint family with two generations of elders over him, there was no question of choice or veto. The elders decided that he should wed, and like a pawn on the chess-board he had to move into the required position. Knowing, as he did, his incapacity to earn anything to support even himself, he pleaded hard against any marriage. Why should the heavy burden on the slender resources of the poor family be increased by the introduction into it, on his account, of an additional mouth to feed? Why should the other members toil harder on this account? Such were the questions he asked. But what chance was there of the views of a lad of fourteen, a helpless, unesteemed member of a large joint family group, getting heard? These objections were overlooked or summarily dismissed as puerile and the marriage ceremonies and festivities went out merrily, the bride being a girl of eight.* Early marriage of boys and girls was then the vogue and in defence of the custom it might be argued* that the spirit of Hinduism was to care more for sex purity of the individual and the community than for mere economy, and that even the determination of the economic future of lads is really a toss. Perhaps in many a case, the parents hoped that the sudden shoving of responsibility on a youth would be the means of stirring him up to face it, just as boys suddenly pushed into water learn to swim. If such were the hopes of Kashinath's parents, they were soon destined to be disillusioned. The youth, obstinate as ever, shrunk from studies and any attention to bread-winning pursuits. Good natured kinsfolk might crack jokes about his mending his ways, putting his best foot forward, and hauling in ultimately a large income wherewith his young wife would be gaily attired and gloriously bejewelled. These goads, however well-meant, would only drive him deeper into the mire of inaction and rumination on his harsh destiny. Married life served only to deepen his glooom, and embitter the cup of life. The pressure of outrageous fortune became so intolerable that even this junior worm began to turn. After some months he boldly expressed even to his grandfather at Satana that further stay at home was impossible and that wandering anywhere—the farther from home, the better—was preferable. He was then sent away to Dhulia to see if change of residence and the company of his parents would allay his mental unrest. But even after going to Dhulia,* the causes of the unrest still continued to operate. Early one morning he got up, wrote out on a sheet of paper the reasons (already stated) for his deserting home, stuck it up in a prominent place, and ran away. He actually ran ten miles from Dhulia fearing pursuit. Thereafter he proceeded more leisurely and trudged a distance of about eighty miles in four days and reached Nasik. There was no pursuit however. After a few hours of search, the parents resigned themselves to the inevitable—to what after all they had long been threatened with. However much it might hurt the self-esteem of the family to have a member running away from them for such reasons, the fact was there and the bitter pill had to be swallowed.

---

* Named Durgabai from Nampur taluk.

* It is not intended to discuss the *pros* and *cons* of that question here; but some reasons that affect the narrative are merely incidentally noted.

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*Even at Dhulia Kashinath would not study, but would get away from home for many hours and secretly spend them in meditation in an underground cave in a corner of the mantapa of the mahadeva temple.

After reaching Nasik, home thoughts naturally came upon Kashinath—especially the thoughts of his parents' anxiety to know what had happened to him. So he wrote home that he was at Nasik and with friends of the family. A month or two later, on receipt of a letter alleging his mother's illness he returned home.

Shortly thereafter his wife died. His single blessedness however did not last long for within a few weeks of her death, a second marriage was settled and celebrated. The parties to the marriage and their parents must all have been fully aware of what had just happened. If with their eyes fully open, they entered upon this marriage, it is difficult to apportion the merit or the blame for it. This time also Kashinath (in his fiteenth year) and his wife of nine summers were both pawns in the hands of the senior players. Within a year of the marrage, life's cup was again so bitter that he started on his travels again, leaving his wife at home. This wife lived in his house for about seven years; and during the first few years of that period, he was at Poona, sometimes attending to menial service in others houses and sometimes begging to obtain food. Later he must have repeatedly gone tramping abroad returning home at rare intervels. In the life of utter poverty and beggary that he thus led, he must have drained the cup of misery to the dregs. This was probably the most painful period of his life—despised, condemned, neglected and dejected- That is the external picture.

Oftentimes Kashinath would blame his stars for his lot and ask himself why Providence was so cruel, and what special sins he must have committed in his past to merit these years of bitter sorrow. No answer was then vouchsafed, but long long afterwards he learnt the full significance of and the necessity for such a severe course. The expert statutory gives no needless stroke to his marble; the expert doctor does not prescribe a grain more or less of wormwood than is necessary for the potion and the gymnastic instructor imposes no useless exercise for the future laurel winner in the Olympic race. Kashinath ultimately discovered that the clouds he had so much dreaded were big with mercy and were breaking in blessings round his head. But during these years his skies were perpetually overcast with dense clouds of privation and sorrow. And he had to face it all without the slightest gleam of hope or the faintest idea of their significance. How many days at a stretch had he to pass without a single meal—Margosa paste and river water proving ineffectual to stave off hunger except for very short periods! How often had he to sleep on the lap of Mother Earth either under a tree or in the open, when even a temple, a Dharmasala (*i.e.* rest house) or other hospitable roof could not be found—with his own arm for a pillow, and the scanty clothing that he wore for his bed and bed cover! What company could he get mostly except wretched beggers devoid of principles and virtue, struggling with each other for the crumbs that fell from their Dives' table!

It is, however, in sorrow's furnace that the mettle of true human steel is brought out. Sir Phillip Sydney's greatness, like Rantideva's, is ever remembered by his parting with the precious cup of water brought to allay his thirst after receiving mortal wounds on the battle-field and giving it to an ordinary soldier in the throes of death with the remark, "Thy need is greater than mine". Devotees of Maharaj ever remember with equal appreciation the latter's concern and care for brother beggars during this period, as brought out by the following among other instances. Living amidst starving or half-starved beggars in a temple* in the outskirts of Poona, he had once passed three full days without a morsel of food. Pinched by hunger on the fourth day, he rambled in the town and chanced to find a lady‡ who wished to give him a full meal. For two days she placed before him increasing quantities of food which however fell short of what he could eat after his prolonged starvation. On the third day, having taken a large quantity and finding the lady willing to give him the same quantity or still more for many a future day, He thereafter took her food and distributed it among the poor beggars at the temple. Stirred by the nobility of his spirit, the lady daily offered more and more of food and was able in the course of a month to feed about a thousand destitute beggars!

Just as in the above instance Kashinath never lost an opportunity to help a suffering brother in his need, he similarly lost no opportunity to move with good and holy persons and pick up, bee-like, little drops of honey even from oitter flowers. Leaving Poona and his beggar friends, Kashinath went to a *sadhu*-Brahmachari who impressed on him the merit and advantages of *Brahmacharya* (celibacy) and of worshipping Siva—which lessons he never forgot to impress on those that approached him in later life.

---

*Of Omkareswar, on the Muta.

‡ At Rasthapeth.

CHAPTER IV

MANY MONTHS IN SAMADHI IN A GROTTO

Leaving the Brahmachari, Kashinath went westwards. It was the usual story of picking up a bit of Bengal gram or parched rice one day, a few bits of barely bread on another and passing several days with nothing at all to eat. After several days of starvation he entered Kalyan; and goaded by hunger, he approached the door-steps of several Brahmin officials for bread, and got instead,—a uniform chilling reply in the negative. He had been since infancy accustomed to starvation and rebuffs, but somehow at Kalyan his powers of endurance gave way. With a choking heart, he went to a well, drank some water and lay under a tree bemoaning his sad fate—tears all the while streaming down his face. An old Mahratha lady passed by and her heart was touched at the sight of the lad of nineteen bathed in tears. She approached and, learning the exact situation, tried to console him by referring to her own sorrows in early life and by reciting to him a Mahrathi verse that she had learnt from her father. It ran thus:—

"Maintain life, even on water, &c. (if you get nothing else). Love God. Endure your lot. Bear up misfortunes. Should Fortune smile, reject her. Burst the bonds of desire. Forsake not saintly company."

Kashinath finding these terse, pithy lines pregnant with wisdom got them by heart and constantly repeated them to himself. At the hands of this old lady he gladly accepted wisdom, but he would not accept food or even water, by reason of his caste scruples. She then helped him with a few tips on the art of beggary. "It is the stern hard-hearted male at the front door that gave you the rebuff," said she, "but go to the gentler sex at the back-door, and there you will find sympathy and food." Acting on this clue hewent once again to those officials' houses—this time by the back-door, and gladly discovered by the food he got, how accurately the Mahratha lady had judged her own sex and the world.

From Kalyan, he turned his steps homewards to Satana. On the way he passed Nasik; and ten miles beyond it were two small temples of Siva (Mahadeva). From there he saw a dense wood, in the centre of which was a hill (the Bhorgadhill) with many precipitous rocks. In one of these was a small grotto, so high up the precipice that neither man nor beast could easily approach it. At this charming sight, the idea flashed into his head that that was an ideal spot, the spot most suitable for his long contemplated *Prayopavesha*,* as he could sit there without food or drink and quietly watch Death coming and seizing his body. It would seem as though the *Vasana* attraction of former births, was carrying him headlong, for reckless of obstacles, he pushed through bush and briar, boulder and thorn and after reaching the foot of the precipice somehow climbed up a height of 20 or 30 feet, now clutching at a little projection, and now at a clump, and reached a narrow ledge of the rock on which grew a small banyan tree. This he climbed and from one of its branches gained the grotto, a small aperture with more than one level at its base, approximately 4 or 5 feet high, 9 feet long and 4 feet broad. He sat there and found it was an unfrequented forest as far as he could see except for a few huts some miles off. Here he sat, and finding it quite to his mind, passed two days and nights without food, drink or sleep—merely waiting to see if Death would come. On the third day, the happy thought struck him that instead of wasting his time and attention on the mere bravado of facing death he should think of God; and he began the silent (*Japa*) repetition of holy syllables While he was thus absorbed, he entered into *Samadhi*, with loss of consciousness of time, space, etc. What time he passed thus, he could not then discover. When he woke from the *Samadhi*, it was with a start, for he found the figure of some one standing by his side and pulling off the entire skin which left his body, like the slough cast off by a serpent. It was the shock of the fear of being flayed alive that roused him into full consciousness; and he looked at his skin after the strange visitor had mysteriously vanished from his sight, and was glad to see that his old skin was intact. Then he felt intense thirst. His mouth and lips were parched; his tongue was retracted. He could not cry out for water and if he cried, who was there in that desolate forest to listen to the cry? Nor was there any water in sight, and even if it was, he had not the power to move. All his limbs and joints were stiff—except his right forearm which alone Providence (or its instrument, his guardian angels) had left free. Clearly then, as there was no water to drink, he must suffer the torture of thirst and meet with death. But he recollected that he had gone to the grotto to meet death and felt no anxiety about dying. The torture of thirst was worse, and kind nature put an end to it by allowing him to pass into an unconscious or semi-conscious state. While in that state, clouds gathered, lightning flashed, thunders pealed and rain poured down in torrents on all sides. Water, water, flowed everywhere, Even into his cave, it flowed; and some of it collected into a pool close to him, so that his free right arm could reach it. He then took up handfull after handfull of the water and for three days quenched his thirst and hunger with it. He also massaged with his free arm the left arm, and with both all his joints and muscles, till all rigidity was removed. After this period of three days he had again a vision—in which, while he was going to a stream to drink water, a Hindu and a Moslem standing by his side pulled off his entire skin and thereby disclosed his divinely glowing body within. Pointing to that body, they told him, "What! You want to die! We will not let you die. We are behind you," and vanished. Therefore, he felt he was not destined to die so soon, and began to consider ways and means to get away from the cave.

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* Prayopavesha means fasting to death. It is not considered wicked, as suicide is.

Restoration of flexibility to the muscles did not suffice to enable him to get down and get back to human haunts. His body was not the strong muscular body of a lad —with which he climbed up. It had shrunk and withered leaving hardly anything more than bone and skin. He could not hope to climb down as his old agility, vigour and strength had deserted him. So he resorted to the device of moving along one of the branches of the banyan tree till he was just over the foot of the precipice, then swung himself from the branch by both his arms, and then gave up his hold trusting to Providence for the result. Providentially he dropped on his posteriors and feet and did not role down the hill; the fall did not produce any fracture, dislocation or other complication; and a few bruises, some swelling and pain were the only results. Thence he hobbled on—it was 4 p. m. when he started —using his hands and feet like a cripple. as he could not walk. Slowly crawling through bush, briar, and rocks across a pathless wild, it was full five hours before he could accomplish two miles and reach the few Bhils'* huts of Gavalwadi, Some women there who looked at his gaunt figure in the dark crawling towards them were scared, fancying it to be some evil spirit, and were about to run away. He raised a faint cry "I am a man. Do not fear." Thus reassured they came to him, took him into their huts and for three days fed him with milk. For a month thereafter he lived on the wild grain (Nachni) given by his Bhil hosts, felled fuel, sold it at Nasik along with them and gave them all the proceeds. Then he resumed his journey to Satana and reached it on 22 July 1890.

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*An aboriginal tribe.

After reaching home, he discovered by computing the time of his travels and return, that he must have spent a long period of many months in deep Samadhi in the Bhorgad grotto.

CHAPTER V

PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY

The stupendous feat accomplished by Kashinath Upasani Maharaj marked the commencement of a new epoch in his life. That he could reach the climax of *Tapas* and pass so many months in unbroken Samadhi, neither he nor his kinsmen ever expected; and that he should return safe after venturing into the jaws of death in the hill cave was still more astounding. He was clearly not a despicable "wood spoon" a mere *tamasic* lad ready with his fist—but a *tapasvi* or *yogi* whose merit, till then lying hidden, might burst out later into full flower, and whose life Providence evidently preserved for something good to be performed at the destined hour.

Thoughts like these about him began to spread, as the Bhorgad chapter of his life became more widely known, with the result that there was an increase in his self-respect self-confidence and response to social opinion and calls of the family. He had returned just in time to discharge his filial duties. In eighteen days of his arrival, *i.e.*, on Gokulashtami day, (8—8—1890) his father died at Satana and he, as the eldest amongst the sons present performed the funeral rites. His grandfather Gopal Sastri was afflicted with hemiplegia and confined to his bed. Nursing him, looking up medical (Ayurvedic) books and holding medical consultation with numerous advisers, fetching and compounding various simples and drugs and learning their properties and specific action in disease, Kashinath picked up some medical knowledge and developed a desire to take up medicine for a profession. His grandfather passed away in 1891, leaving the family not only poor but actually in debt, *i.e.*, in extremely straitened circumstances; and for a year thereafter the family had to depend on the princely generosity of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak for its maintenance. At about this time, Kashinath's second wife passed away, by reason of post-parturition troubles. Meanwhile Balkristna Sastri worked hard and earned something and similarly Kashinath wanting to equip himself for his intended profession went to Sangli and maintaining himself with great difficulty, studied Ayurveda and Sanskrit grammar under the renowned scholar Venkataramanachar. The first year of his medical practice at Amraoti, though clouded by a mishap,* was still marked by an

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*The mishap referred to was in 1896. Some stuff was distributed as *prasada* among the people present at a temple at Jalgaon, by Pandit Kashinath as some one had given him the stuft with a request to distribute it there. Some of those who ate it sickened and died. Obviously it must have been unwholesome stuff. For this, Pandit Kashinath was convicted and given four months' simple imprisonment. That the conviction did not imply any moral turpitude will be clear not merely from the nature of the sentence, but also from the facts that his medical practice, etc., steadily grew thereafter (1895-1906) at Amraoti and Nagpur and that he moved freely in respectable society.

increase in his practice which was maintained for ten years. It was in 1896 he went to Amraoti and with the help of Mr, G. S. Khaparde (who became later, a Dewan Bahadur and a member of the Council of State), he established a dispensary there, with a branch at Nagpur, advertised his patent medicines, edited a vernacular medical monthly, "Bheshaja Ratnamala," developed his practice and accumulated some savings. He had married his third wife before he went to Amraoti and she lived with him and led a simple, orthodox and pious life like himself. Fortune was smiling on him and from a worldly point of view, these ten years at Amraoti formed the halcyon period of his life. His inherent religious tendency made him keep up some *puja*, *Japa*, *Parayana*, the study of books like Rama Gita, Panchadasi, and the practice of *Pranayama*. He ate little, attended religious discourses and occasionally delivered religious lectures. If Fortune continued to smile upon him (and there was no apparent reason why she should not) he was likely to end his life at Nagpur or Amraoti a highly respected house-holder (*Girhasta*) owning his houses and enjoying to the last a lucrative practice and the love of his patients and neighhours.

But was this to be the consummation of the life so marvellously preserved at the

Bhorgad cave by his mysterious guardians? Were all the training in humiliation, privation, pain and sorrow that he received, the splendid *tapas* he performed and the Samadhi he achieved to have no higher results? Anyhow in 1906 when "Doctor Upasani" was at the zenith of his practice, no other results appeared possible. Humanly speaking, the doctor, though childless,* was happy and prosperous and would develop his wealth and practice in due course and devote his entire life to doing as much good as a wealthy and pious doctor might do, in his circumstances.

Where was, however, the mystic super vision, over his life, that revealed to him his lustrous *(Divya Sarira)* body at Bhorgad and saved him from losing his physical life? Had it ceased or would it once again interfere and prevent his smothering his higher spiritual life in the downy bed of wordly prosperity?

In nature's benign arrangement, Therapeutics develops the anti-venin with the aid of the venin, the anti-toxin with the aid of the toxin, in the same organism, and similarly a remedy for social or moral evils shows itself at times in the social or individual organism. Pandit Upasani's increasing wealth brought up the question of investment of funds to the fore. After spending something on silver vessels, improved furniture and other comforts, he spent some money on religious objects and yet something remained calling for investment. Just at the time there was the Gwalior craze, Large estates known as "Malguzaris" corresponding to the "Mittas" of South India and "Zamindaris" of Bengal were to be had on cheap and attractive terms. Our doctor found that on the mere payment of a premium of Rs. 600 he would be put in possession of an estate containing 2,000 acres, part of which was occupied by tenants, and that he could collect rents from them and lease out the unoccupied waste,or cultivate part of it with the aid of imported labour, and thus pay State dues and net a large profit. Anxious not to miss such a chance, he sent up his money, packed up his kit—delibarately intending to give up his practice, his dispensary, his patent medicines, and his medical journal, bade good-bye to Amraoti and Nagpur, and entered into possession of his estate. Pandit Upasani Sastri thereafter was transformed into Kashinath Upasani Malguzar and the daily city rounds among grateful patients gave place to the perpetual peregrinations of a tax-gathering and labour—controlling mittadar. However there were features of this malguzar life that he did not know or take due account of, before entering on it. Lessees from beyond the State were looked upon as foreign land grabbers, and the tenants, the labourers, the village officers and their superior officials—all threw innumerable obstacles in the new malguzar's way—especially at the bitter instigation of the previous malguzar. Rents could not be easily collected and even imported labour could not be controlled. Complaints to officials were unheeded and resort to courts was unsatisfacory as the proverbial law's delay and doubt were intensified in the atmosphere of a native State. Upasani Malguzar found that he had to spend all that he saved; and yet payment of State dues was delayed. Distraint on his goods was levied by the local officers with alacrity to humiliate and modify him. He found that complaint to higher offcials was useless and that he was throwing away good money after bad. Moreover, with the constant tossing and travel from place to place, and his harassing anxieties,—sometimes even his life being imperrilled by the hostility of his tenants and labourers—his health began to give way. After a couple of years' trial, when he found that even a personal interview with the State ruler afforded him no relief or solution for his interminable problems, he surrendered his malguzari back to the State and got back to Amraoti to resume his quite life as a doctor, hoping to put an end to his misfortunes.

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* Only one child was born to the third wife; and that died before it was four weeks old.

At Amroati, however, ill-luck still dogged his heels. Medical practice, once deserted, could not be recalled at will. The sale of his patent medicines had dwindled and his journal was dead—leaving only liabilities, if anything, behind. To build up a fresh practice he used all his energies. But with his broken health this was by no means an easy task. Often times he would return at night from his professional rounds thoroughly tired and jaded. Noting this fact, his wife prevailed upon him to reduce his practice. When he insisted that he must effect some saving for her sake, should she survive him, she *was pained at the very idea* and assured him that she was going to predecease him. The doctor gradually reduced and finally closed his practice and on 10th April 1910, with nothing on hand, he set out with his wife to enjoy rest and utilise his time and energies in holy pilgrimage.

CHAPTER VI

PILGRIMAGE

The pious couple visited Omkar Linga on the banks of Narmada. There is a small hillock there enclosed between that river and its branch, Kaveri. On the top of that hillock and in the midst of the jungle is a small temple with a huge *linga*—the Somnath or Gowrishankar Temple. The *linga* is about eleven feet in circumference and its height without the pedestal is six feet, and with it nine. Solitude usually reigns supreme in this temple. So the pair sat, one on each side of the *linga*, to pursue their meditation;and unconsciously or consciously the doctor revived his old practice of breath control (*Parnayama*).

After a short while, the lady noticed that the doctor was lying down without speech, or consciousness—nay, even without breath. She was frightened and splashed some water on his face. This restored his consciousness, but not his breathing. The doctor was now aware that he had returned to consciousness, but the primary respiratory apparatus appeared to have been paralysed. Instinctively he began to move other muscles and parts of his body, and breathing was started. To keep up the breathing, he found it is necessary to keep on exercising the other muscles connected with his breathing; and a strange groaning or whining sound marked this forced breathing. Anyhow, life had been miraculously saved this time also; and thankful for that mercy, the pair went back to Nagpur.

Even at Nagpur the breathing difficulty would crop up often and force him to strain himself and breathe very quickly and with noise to ensure respiration. Apart from that strain, and even when the fits of forced breathing were not on, there was the ever present fear, hanging like a Damocles' sword over him, that suddenly his breathing and heart-beats might stop and leave him dead. He could not, therefore, sleep, gulp solid food, or evacuate his bowels (his constipation involved a straining at this process mostly)—and such an interference with the fundamental functions of life greatly reduced and weakened his frame and rendered life miserable.

With such poor health, it is no wonder that Pandit Kashinath had not much chance of regaining his medical practice at Nagpur. He was himself too much in need of medical aid to render it to others. A number of doctors were consulted. But a case like his appeared not to have been within the range of their experience and study. As it had arisen from his efforts at *Pranayama*, some opined that it was no disease at all but a suspension of respiration and perhaps even circulation, which is achieved by the biggest experts in Hata Yoga, which might have come to him unbidden and which might, in due course, pass off by itself without any treatment.

Anyhow Nagpur afforded no relief to the suffering Pandit. Fearing that he might pass away suddenly and not wishing to cause trouble to others even at death, by dying amidst strangers, he went away to Dhulia where his mother and brother lived. Here again the usual medical and religio-medical advice, sought and unsought came to him with the same result as before Orthodoxy traces all disease or trouble to previous *karma* ; the remedy suggested to meet or modify such *karma* is the performance of *satkaram* (*i.e.* good works) at present; and nothing is commoner than the prescription for serious disease, which directs the patient's wife to do good works to avoid widowhood. Thus Pandit Kashinath's wife went 1.25,000 times round a sacred fig (Oudhumbar) tree in order that he may be restored to health. All efforts medical and religious, however, proved to be of no avail, and the Pandit grew exasperated. Mere emaciation of body and the discomforts attendant on disease, he would not mind. If death came at once and with certainty, that would have been a mercy. But he was tantalised by the constant fear haunting him for many months that death might visit him suddenly any moment, He felt that he was making all his relations anxious and miserable on his account for too long a time. When merely twelve months had been thus spent by him at Dhulia, he resolved to go out into the world either to find a Yogi that could cure him and send him back to a happy (householder's) life as before, or to die somewhere; giving no more trouble to his relations. It did not occur to him that other alternatives were possible. With this resolve he set out from Dhulia at the beginning of April 1911, accompanied at first by two lads who were sent to help him on his journey. But after a day's journey he drove the lads away and went out on his lonely quest of health at the hands of Yogis.

CHAPTER VII

SEARCH FOR A YOGI TO CURE DISEASE

The first Yogi that the Pandit approached was one Yogi Koolkarni of Rahuri near Ahmednagar. But instead of getting treatment or advice for curing bodily ailments there he received, much to his disappointment and regret—abundance of worship. The Yogi, after ascertaining particulars, was evidently convinced that Somnath Temple to the Pandit was the accession to that advanced stage of Yoga when even breathing and circulation are stopped so that even the subconscious mind is silenced and the soul is merged in deepest *Samadhi*.*

Assuring his visitor, that his *Sushumna* had been called into activity without any

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*What a strange resemblance this has to Wordsworth's *samadhi*, described by him in his "Lines on Tintern Abbey," thus :—

"............That serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until the *breath* of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost *suspended*, we are laid asleep
In body and become a living soul.
While with an eye made quiet by the power,
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things."

effort at all and that he had far excelled all Yogis thereby without systematically studying or practicising the science or art of Yoga, he requested him (the Pandit) to go to the Avalia Sai Baba at Shirdi for further advancing his spiritual interests. But hearing the words "Avalia" and "Sai," and noting that the person so mentioned was Mahomedan, the Pandit's orthodox mind recoiled at the thought of his Brahminical head touching a Moslem's feet. Despite the Yogi's assurance that Sai Baba was above all caste and creed—and no ordinary soul—the Pandit could not get out of his usual groove; and he was still on the look out for some Hindu Yogi who would undertake his cure.

One day while walking in the streets of Rahuri, Pandit Kashinath met an old man who, after making due enquiry, said "Oh! this trouble with you is merely 'Wind'—*Vatha*. Drink water as hot as your tongue can bear. Avoid cold drink. And you will get all right," and went away. Unsought and unpaid-for advice, medical or legal, is as a rule disregarded. Brushing it aside, Kashinath started off to Moregaon with a view to see a Hindu Yogi, Phatak by name. On the way, however, at Jejuri, he got a sudden fit of *Vairagya* – a thorough disinclination to attened any longer to mere concerns of health. Finding an enclosure in a prickly-pear bush in a lonely place, he sat there for a week, passed it mostly in *Samadhi* and occasionally quenched his thirst and hunger with the fruit of the prickly-pear. On the eighth day, feeling thirsty, he went to an adjoining stream to drink its cool and clear water. Just then he recalled to mind the old man's advice given at Rahuri, (156 miles away); and strange to say, immediately the old man himself stood beside him and in an angry tone thus addresesd him—"Did I not warn you to avoid drinking cold water, and you drink hot water only? Go to the adjoining village, get hot water there and drink it." With these words, the old man disappeared. Kashinath adopted the advice and drank hot water*. The beneficial results of hot drink were apparent even from the first day. He perspired profusely and "Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep" that never visited him for a long time, graciously settled on his lids. Thus convinced of the benefits of the hot water treatment, he kept it up ever afterwards. In about twenty days' time, his health had improved so greatly at Jejuri that he might well have sped back happily to rejoin his family and resume his domestic felicity. But somehow, as he had gone up so far to see Phatak and as he feared that he had not been permanently cured, he proceeded to Moregaon. Missing Phatak there, he next proceeded to see Narayana Maharaj, of Kedgaonbet, the celebrated Datta Bhakta at Bombay.

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*At the house of Chintopant Belsare, whose relations were staunch devotees of Sai Baba.

When Pandit Kashinath visited Sri Narayan Maharaj at Bombay, he was greatly mystified by the reception he got. Maharaj made him chew betel and remarked that he (Pandit was thoroughly well colored inside and outside and that there was no necessity for any further talk or communication between them both, Pandit again called on him the next day and was greatly puzzled at the remark of Maharaj that there was no need to come again and visit him, and that Pandit's business had already been finished. Pandit left Maharaj wondering what business of his was already finished, and why there was no need for him to call, upon Maharaj. Possibly the 'work finished' might be recovery of health. But what was the coloring inside and outside? Did it refer literally to the red color of the chewed betel on the lips and inside the mouth of Pandit? Or was the color a metaphor or an allusion?

Anyhow, Pandit's round of visits to Yogis was over and as he had even written home just before reaching Bombay informing his brother about his health and tour programme, his only idea was to get back to hearth and home, which restored health enabled him to enjoy. On his way back, he visited Yogi Kulkarni and that Yogi insistted on his seeing Sai Baba, as Shirdi was practically on his way home. Yielding to his insistence, Pandit Kashinath visited Shirdi on 27th June 1911. After staying a day or two, he went to take leave of Sai Baba, who however told him to stay on. When the Pandit pleaded his inbility to do so, Sai Baba gave him leave to go with the condition that he should return in eight days. This condition Pandit objected, it was not possible for him to fulfil, considering especially his financial difficulties. Sai then insisted that Pandit should stay on and not leave Shirdi at all. Pandit felt his position very painful, as he was placed on the horns of a dilemma. Either he should not go at all, or if he went, he should return in eight days. Both alternatives were very distasteful. As he was feeling worried over the situation, Sai Baba remarked "You seem perplexed. Well, go, if you like. I will see what I can do." Rejoicing that leave had been granted, Kashinath left Shirdi. One would naturally take it that in his anxiety to get home, he would travel straight to Dhulia. But, for some unaccountable reason, he moved slowly from one place to another and never got off beyond a radius of 14 miles from Shirdi. On the eighth day he was at Kopergaon (8 miles off Shirdi) with a Brahmachari Bua who vainly tried to induce him to go to Sai Baba once again. When some pilgrims came to that Bua, on their way to Shirdi, the Bua told them to take Pandit Kashinath with them; and by their persuasion Pandit accompained them to Shirdi. When he bowed before Sri Sai Baba, the latter queried him :—

Sai :—Ho ! You have came ? When did you leave this place ?

Pandit Kashinath :—Thursday.

Sai :—At what time ?

P. K. :—At three.

Sai :—What day of the week is this ?

P. K. :—Thursday.

Sai :—What is the time now ?

P. K. :—Three.

Sai :—How long it is since you left ?

P. K. :—A week. To-day is the eighth day.

Sai :—Hallo ! When you left, you protested that you could not return within eight days !

P. K.:—I do not know how this has happened. It is all your doing.

Sai:—Man, I was behind you all these eight days. Now go and stay in that wada (*i. e.*, Kaka Saheb's, where visitors of Sai usually stayed. Wada means a building within a compound).

Kashinath, finding himself helpless before such a mighty will, yielded docile obedience to Sai's order. He understood then what Sai had said at the time of his departure,—"Go, if you like. I will see what I can do."

Staying at Shirdi, Pandit Kashinath joined in the worship, *Arati** *Seva*,‡ etc., of Sri Sai that prevailed there, carefully observed everything that took place and made full enquiries about Sai Baba and his chief disciples.

CHAPTER VIII

SAI BABA

About the middle of the last century, in the village of Pathri, H. H. the Nizam's territory, a male child was born in a Brahmin family and given away to a fakir. It grew up a fakir, served and obtained the grace of a great Hindu saint "Venkatesh" (or "Venkusa") and developed strange psychic powers side by side with many noble virtues. At the age of sixteen he visited Shirdi, and stayed there for three years, uuder a margosa tree close to the tomb of his guru (evidently a guru in a former birth). Then he went back to the Nizam's State, where he saw one Chanbai Patel of Dhopkeda village running about in search of a horse that he had lost two months back, and though not previously acquainted with the man, told him where exactly his horse would be found. Finding it in the place mentioned, Patel came to the fakir and beheld more wonders. The fakir wished to get fire and water for smoking his pipe and struck the earth in one place with a hoop and produced, like Moses, plenty of water and in another place with a pair of pincers and produced a piece of red-hot coal, in an instant. Patel received the fakir as his guest and after a visit to various places, brought him over to Shirdi on the occasion of a marriage in 1872. Since then the fakir stayed at shirdi and was known merely as "Sai" Baba—a name which can apply to any saint.

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* Arati is worship, with waving of lights, etc.

‡ Seva is service.

Sai stayed in the mosque and begged his food daily in the streets. Clad in his simple and ragged "cuphni" he would often

SHRI SADGURU SAIBABA,

SHRI RUKMINI MATA,
(*Mother of Shri Upasani Baba*).

be seen sitting apparently idle under a margosa tree or in the fields. Sometimes he would be talking angrily—at what and why none could guess. He thus passed for a crazy fakir. His goodness of heart was however occasionally noticeable. To people in sickness, he would take medicines procured and compounded by himself, and he would also nurse the patients,—gratis, of course. If there were holy hermits in the village, he would go and talk with them on spiritual matters. He went on repeating God's name "Hári, Hari" and acquired more power, and thereafter he cured diseases, not by medicines, but by giving his "*udhi*", i. e., sacred ashes. The villagers that first treated him as crazy or insane once refused him the usual supply of oil for burning his lamps at the Masjid. That night he used only water for his lamps and kept them burning for the whole night on water alone. Later, by his blessings, a landlord and a police inspector, who had each two or three wives but no issue, obtained issue. These miracles and the no less miraculous cures of diseases, possesssion and other troubles by the use of his "*udhi*" spread his fame far and wide in the Bombay Presidency. Thousands flocked to his feet and gradually began to worship him, even in the mosque with all the din and bustle and all the forms of Hindu worship. Far from converting his

Hindu devotees to Islam or Islamite devotees to Hinduism, he made each set observe its own usages and follow its own principles. He called the mosque "Dwaraka Mayi," got a "Brindaban," (*i. e.*, Tulasi plant with a groin and platform round it) erected in it, directed the reading of Sri Bhagavata, etc., there, by his Hindu devotees and was everything to every one. A Telugu Sastri vowed that if a child, under his treatment, almost *in extremis*, and unable to swallow milk even, should drink milk in five minutes and improve from the next day, he, the Sastri, would admit that Sai Baba was the *avatar* of God Datta himself. The child drank milk at once and improved from the next day and the Sastri was convinced that Sri Sai was Datta. Others viewed him as Vittoba (God of Pandharpur) or Ganapati, Krishna, Rama or Lashmi-Narayan, and had experiences which justified them in their belief. Moslems also would go to him and honour him as a rare "Avalia" or saint that could work any wonders he pleased. Devotees of all religions found that he could see anything taking place at any place or time—in the past, present or even distant future; that nothing ever spoken by him was false or falsified; that he could himself appear at any place, do anything he wanted and disappear; and that he used these powers (which they could only describe as Omnipresence, Omniscience and Omnipotence) as the guardian angel of those who surrendered themselves to him as their sole refuge, out of pure mercy and love—but never for pecuniary or other despicable reasons. Towards the end of his career he was indeed frequently, almost invariably, asking for or demanding gifts—"*dakshina*" from his visitors. But the circumstances in each case would show that, not attachment to money, but some laudable object was the cause of the demand. During the last ten years of his life, he would receive between Rs. 100 and Rs. 300 a day as *dakshina*. He would nsually give away three-fourths of the collection to fakirs, and the remainder to one Tatya Patel to whose family he was indebted for support in his earliest years at Shirdi and others. On occasions, he used the collections for providing accommodation and food for visitors. Every morning and every night he would be a penniless pauper fakir, and during the day when moneys freely flowed in, he would go and beg his food and live on that alone. In spite of his vast powers, influence and income, he was never conceited—though always bold and independent. Once the Revenue Commissioner with his wife, the District Collector, and an array of officials came to him to have direct demostration, an ocular proof of his mystic powers. Far from encouraging the visit or feeling flattered or fluttered by their presence, he made them wait at the *chavadi* and went out to beg. When they grew impatient, he extended the time, after which alone he would be accessible to them—and was no way disappointed or displeased at their impatient and immediate departure. With the late Dewan Bahadur G. S. Khaparde, B.A., L.L.B., innumerable visitors and devotees could truthfully say "Sri Sai Baba fulfilled my idea of God on earth."

CHAPTER IX

PROBATION AT SHIRDI

Sri Sai's direction to the Pandit was quite laconic, "Go and remain in that house," and did not specify any goal to reach or methods to adopt. Sai's objective and ideas were mostly wrapped in mystery, and only the party concerned would be given a faint hint, a momentary inkling of what he should do, and what might happen; and none would ordinarily dare question that God-man about his intent or design. Kashinath took his abode at the "Wada" with other devotees and made eager inquiries about the experiences of others, the methods of Sai, his wonderful powers and his high moral and spiritual nature. He found that all devotees regarded Sri Sai as every inch a God, and yielded unquestioning obedience to his high commands—which were invariably merciful, just and beneficial to them. He fell in with the current and resolved to act likewise and in the same spirit. But a young colt is not easily broken in ; and despite his forty years of training, mostly in the trying school of adversity, he was but a colt in the hands of this master tamer. Conflicting currents held alternate sway over him ; and nothing but the superhuman wisdom, power and kindness of Sai could harmonise his internal conflicts, illumine his darkened soul, raise him from his depths to the desired spiritual height and keep him supported at that level.

"Presumptuous man, Presume not God to scan," says the poet; and ardent devotees extend this interdiction and contend that their Guru-God is unknowable. Yet, one seeking to understand something of a saint's biography in circumstances like the above is obliged to hold his little taper to their glorious Sun—for example, to explain Sri Sai's ideas, aims and plans. The first step of Sri Sai seems to be to rouse the would-be devotee to the highest pitch of reverence for his guru, to place his unqualified "transference" in his master. The neophyte was allowed many a glimpse into the Master's mystic powers and kindness often exercised to release him or others of earthly cares and troubles, so that he might place implicit and unshaken reliance and faith in the Guru,—the faith of a child in its mother. Verily (as an axiom of the science of Faith, it may be declared) whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in nowise enter therein.

Sai once spoke as follows before his assembled devotees, and as the talk is an excellent illustration of his methods and manner of speaking, it is set out in full here: "One day as I walked along, I noticed a pregnant woman. Her belly was protruding.* Her hands and feet were emaciated. She was alone. She was grunting with pain. She could not walk easily and had to support herself with a stick. I laughed at her and said 'I think I have known you. Do you recognise me? You have been carrying for many years. Why are you not yet delivered of your child?' She could not reply and so I added, 'Let that pass. You had better adopt the rule of drinking only hot water.

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* After Kashinath's breathing trouble began, his paunch was protruding quite noticeably.

That will make delivery easy.' She heeded not my advice and went to a stream to drink water. 'Hallo', thought I 'she will die and that unnecessarily, and the numerous children in her belly will also perish with her'. So I went up to her and said 'Dame, did I not tell you to avoid cold drink? Why have you come to this stream? Go to the village, get hot water to drink.' I directed her to our village. From that day she began to drink hot water. Now she is alright....This is all nothing but the effect of 'Wind'—*Vatha*, and happens, for instance, when the intestines are strangulated."

As Sai spoke thus, he occasionally pointed in the direction of Pandit Kashinath, and occasionally glanced at him. The Pandit (and none else) understood the drift of Sai's words. 'Hallo'!—thought he—'it is Sri Sai then that came to me as an old man at Rahuri to give me the recipe of hot drink; and it is he who forced me to follow it by his sudden appearance at Jejuri, 156 miles off from Rahuri; and he is the kind saviour who has thus cured my trouble that defied the skill of all doctors, *vaids* and Yogis.' With a heart overflowing with gratitude, he might even wonder what should induce Sri Sai to take such great pains on his behalf. To clear this doubt, Sri Sai thus addressed him once;—

"There is *Rinanubhandha* (mutual obligation) between us. Our families have been inter-locked by mutal obligations for centuries, nay—for a thousand years. So there is no difference between you and me."

Listening to this declaration of Sri Sai, identifying the interests of both, Pandit was deeply moved and his inexpressible feeling streamed out of his eyes. Once Sai referred to the nature of the mutal obligations between the two families in words that half conceal and half reveal the actual facts. Said he :—

"There was a well; at its brink was a tree; and on the tree birds sat. Suddenly one of them slipped down and was about to be drowned. Down jumped its loving friend from the tree to save it. The first was saved, but the second nearly lost its life."* No further light did Sri Sai deign to throw on the details of this ancient scene which still powerfully influenced him in his care for Pandit Kashinath.

While the Guru was thus on the one hand binding his neophyte to himself with hoops of steel, there were on the other hand forces at work in the contrary direction. Besides the unsuitability of the Shirdi hotel meal to Kashinath's constitution, there were other causes at work.* Sri Sai's pointed favour to Pandit roused the jealousy of some devotees; and Pandit's unsocial ways furnished them an easy handle to molest him. Anxious to set about his spiritual improvement in right earnest, he tried to cut down his *Vyavahara* and *Samsara*, *i. e.*, points of contact with the external world by resorting to solitude विविक्तदेशसेवित्वं and taciturnity मितभाषणं. He spent his time in a lonely dilapidated temple of Khandoba, some distance away from the village, and spoke as little and to as few as possible, except when he made enquiries about Sai Baba and his chief devotees. These enquiries and this secrecy roused the suspicion of the villagers and they set the police and the mamlatdar at him. He was mistaken for a revolutionary or a C. I. D. Officer in *mufti*, and was pestered to give a full account of himself on pain (in case of refusal) of being subjected to their surveillance. These anoyances made Pandit long to get away and enjoy undistrubed the pleasures of his own home ; and he constantly asked his friend Madhavarao Deshpande (a retired school-master and devotee of Sri Sai) to get leave from the Guru to go away. But the Guru would not grant leave. As for the police and official interference, he encouraged Pandit to defy them—for, as he had his Guru's support, they had no power to touch a hair of his head. This assurance removed only one difficulty from the Pandit's path and he still was hankering after the comparative ease and happiness he would have in his domestic life, and he still pressed the Guru for leave to go away.

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*Sai Baba appearing in the form of a sadhu addressed Upasani Maharaja's elder brother at Rishikesa-Tapovan about 1898 and again as Sai Baba at the mosque in 1912 Jan. 1st thus:—"Lo ! there was a tree. Two persons went up that tree. One fell down. The other went up."

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* Maharaja had his fears that his disease was still burrowing within his body and would suddenly flare up and end his life. When this was communicated to Sai Baba, his reassuriug reply was "This place, Shirdi, is not for *Maran* (*i. e.*, death) but for *Taran* (*i. e.*, salvation)."

Sri Sai would not, however, allow Pandit Kashinath to get away as the latter had to "clear his accounts" with Sai before he could leave. When Sai was asked what accounts they were, he would vouchsafe only a mystic reply that Sai settled the accounts of all that came to him. After some weeks, he said that all accounts had been settled except two or four cartloads; and still later, *i.e.*, in *Sravan i.e.*, July-August 1911, he declared that the settlement had been arrived at, the result of which was that "Kashinath must remain four years at Shirdi." Pandit gasped at this doom, this terrible prospect of spending four more years (at cheerless Shirdi) exiled from home, - and wept. Sri Sai consoled him by saying that by the completion of this term of four years, the full grace of God (Khandoba)* would be showered on him. Questioned by Madhava Rao what the Pandit was to do at Shirdhi for four long years, Sai replied "He must simply sit quiet in *Vitoba's Temple, doing nothing " उगे मुगे " and added turning to the Pandit—' Have nothing to do with anybody. Your future is very excellent, No other has such a fine future." and turning to others declared, "Such is his worth: The whole world may be put in one scale, and he in the other." He is merely to eat bread and vegetables and sit quiet. I shall accomplish (the rest, *i,e.*) what I want."

There were several older devotees of Sri Sai Baba present at this declaration, to whom also it was nothing but gall and wormwood. One of them, a Prabhu by caste from Bombay, broke out thus:

"Well, Baba, we have been at your feet for a long time. You say nothing of us.

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* Sri Sai used khandoba (an avatar of Siva) and Vithoba (a form of Mahavishnu) indiscriminately to denote God. To him all gods were one—God. This was probably the execellent result of his being trained in monotheistic Mahomedanism in his earliest and most impressionable years.

This is a newcomer, of whom nobody knows anything—and you promise to give him your full grace in four years. You say also that he can be balanced against the whole world. Have we spent all our time with you for nothing? Do you now give him a grant on a copper plate of your full favour? Is this true" ?

Sri Sai was not one to be easily frightened or to mince matters; and he rejoined, looking full-face at the last speaker.

"Do you take my words to be lies? Is this a mosque for liars? What I have spoken I *have* spoken. Every thing I have got has been completely given to him. You ask me if I am giving him a copper plate grant? Why copper? I have given him a gold plate grant. *Now* say what you have to upon this."

Sri Sai then turned to Pandit and asked him:—"Which is better—copper plate or gold plate?" But the latter had been so much stunned by this sudden order of internment (as he deemed it) at Shirdi that he could not think, and he merely blubbered out the the answer:—"I have no skill in such matters." Sai Baba said: "Copper wears out and rusts. Gold does not; it always remains the same, however used. You are like pure gold. Wherever you may be, you are God. Now understand fully that the *gold plate grant is given into your hands.* Hereafter you need not go to me frequently. Come to me only occasionally. You should not however talk to me. Nor will I talk to you. After four years, you will have the full favour of Mhalsapathi (*i.e.*, Khandoba) and you will realise everything. Your ancestors and mine have been connected with each other for centuries by bonds of mutual obligations."

Pandit Kashinath:—Baba, why do you impose on me such heavy responsibility while I am totally unfit to bear it! I have no desire to be all that. Let me go home. Please give me leave.

Sai:—Do not think of such things now. I know full well what you are; and you will (come to) know who I am. I am and have been after you for these many years. Whatever has been done by you—good or evil—has, in fact, been done by me. You have not recognised me, but I have recognised you thoroughly, I have been intently thinking of you for many a year. Now where are you to go or come? If you are unable to do (*i. e.* accomplish) anything, keep quiet. (Sai then added striking his own breast in token of determination and a personal undertaking) I shall personally accompany* you and get a ticket for you. I shall get you a seat in the train and see that you directly reach your destination, without any break or stoppage on the way.

The Bombay Prabhu again said: What is this, Baba! You have given everything you have to this individual.

Sai Baba :—Yes, yes. Everything has been given ‡ Whatever he be, good or bad, he is mine. There is *no distinction* between me and him. Now, the whole responsibility for him rests with me.

With these words of Sai—the fate of Pandit Kashinath was sealed. He was doomed to renounce home-life, (*grihastasrama*). That old chapter of his life was closed. He was to emerge into a new life as a God-man with myriads of worshippers, with power to grant them salvation and earthly blessings also. In one word, the Sad-Guru Sri Sai had definitely blessed Kashinath with the promise of his grace, to turn him into a Sat-Purush or Sad-Guru; and the actual manifestation of the traits of Sat-Purusha was a mere question of time—a thing to be brought about in the succeeding four years of his stay there.

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*In accordance with the well-known lines of Narayana in the Arati verse जो साधुच्या अंकित जीव झाला, त्यचा असे भार नीरंजनाला which means "when the Sat-Purusha or Sad-Guru seals any devotee as his own, thereafter all respon-sibility for the latter's welfare falls upon the Sad-Guru or Sat-Purusha".

‡Baba repeated his assurance of the grant of his grace to Pandit Kashinath, and added the latter had nothing at all to do in order to obtain that grace except remaining by Baba (*i.e.* at Shirdi) for the prescribed period.

"Wherever you are, you are God—you will realise everything." Strange words are these. In the mouth of a Pantheist or a Vedantic Adwaitin, they would be merely axioms or patent truths applicable as much to every other person as to Kashinath Maharaja. But Sri Sai's use was totally different and powerfully recall the mystic language of Sri Narayana Maharaj. Was not this declaration or dedication by the former the perfect "colouring inside and out" mentioned by the latter? Readers know that in this country, people pick up any unused stone (—perferably one washed ashore by some great river), clean it, paint it completely with red vermilion and instal it as an image which, after the performance of due ceremonies, turns into and is worshipped as God by thousands who derive therefrom the numerous blessings they crave for. Sri Sai seems similarly to have picked up (if one may say so without any disrespect) this stone Kashinath, washed down by the stream of Time and cast ashore by the high-tide of suffering, given him by the above declaration an outside coating of Divinity and started at once the corresponding inner development which however would take four years for its completion.

Did these words of Sri Sai, adumbrated in a way by Sri Narayan Maharaj, come true—unthwarted by adverse influences? The reader would remember the opening paragraph of the first chapter and find his clue there. He might however desire to learn further details of the story, how and since what date Sri Sai was able to convert Kashinath Maharaj into an object of worship, what internal changes were effected to make him deserve that worship, and what purposes were served or benefits produced by that worship.

Since the great Sai made the above declaration, we shall drop the terms Pandit and Doctor and refer to the subject of this sketch as Maharaj during the term of his noviciate.

CHAPTER X

GREATNESS THRUST UPON HIM

Even after Sri Sai pronounced his high decree in Sravan (July-Aug. 1911), there was no apparent change for a time in the tenor of Maharaj's life. No doubt, he thereafter kept himself aloof from company, as far as he could. Still he had to go to the village for his meal, for occasional attendance at the Arati, and to attened the study group from Jan. 1913 to 27-3-1912 wherein Mr. G. S. Khaparde expounded Paramamrita and Panchadasi to half a dozen fellow-devotees. Maharaj would spend his time in bath, and *Nityakarma*, *i. e.*, the usual routine of prayer and Japa, repeating the Bhagavad Gita, and Vishnu Sahasranama. He would occasionally read Rama Gita, and Adhyatma Ramayana. There was hardly any change in his external circumstances, worthy of mention—except the loss of his wife at the end of January, 1912. This was a great blow to him. He was very affectionate towards this third wife with whom the happiest years of his life had been spent and he tried in fact to send for her, as soon as Sri Sai's decree of 4 years' stay was pronounced. But when he broached the subject, the Guru, professing to sanction the proposal, showed his real aversion to the neophyte's trying to resume the chains of *samsara* that were being gently yet unmistakably removed,—and the proposal had to be dropped. A week before her actual death, a letter intimating her illness was received at Shirdi, and Kashinath Maharaj eagerly applied for permission to go to Dhulia, but the Guru turned down this proposal also. When on 6-2-1912 intimation of her death was received, the poor husband was quite upset and went to the Guru asking for permission to go away, considering God's (Khandoba's) grace (that was to be showered on him four years later) as having little use to him after the wife was gone. Sri Sai however consoled him with the assurance that her spirit had attained its highest goal in having come to him (Sri Sai). Despite this assurance, the grief-laden husband went with ten rupees and gave it to Sri Sai, requesting him to use it to confer "Sad-Gati," *i. e.*, a good state on the disembodied spirit and prayed for the Guru's grace for himself. The Guru returned the amount and assured him that his grace had already been granted, that whatever was not necessary for the disciple had been taken away, and that what was necessary had been given. Again Sri Sai said, "I am fully responsible for you. Go to Vitoba's temple and sit quiet. Live as I told you before.

Then Shama (*i. e.*, Madhava Rao) will drag you out. And I will make you sit in the open.* Do not think of anything." Again, placing his hand on his own breast, Sri Sai said—"The whole world in the one scale and you in the other. Such is your merit."

Externally, as stated already, there was very little change in the condition of Maharaj, save the breaking off of his strongest domestic chain. But internally there was something going on, the course of which would baffle the genius of the best psychologist or psycho-analyst to discern or describe—apart from the slow soaking of the sacred literature mentioned above.

CHAPTER XI

THE LEAVEN OF SAI

Sri Sai Said in August 1911 and in February 1912 that he had granted Maharaj his grace. What was that invisible golden grant, and were there no external traces at all of its mystic operation?

Maharaj, long accustomed to his solitude, Gita study and *Yogabhyasa*, had no difficulty in finding out what was expected of him by the Guru's cryptic order "Sit quiet, उगे मुगे. Have nothing to do with any one." That of course was not an order to him to sit idle or snore away. It was rather a command to observe a masterly inactivity, to set about his spiritual quest in dead earnest, avoiding all cares, all unnecessary external contact and all unnecessary thought.* It involved the restraint of his ten *indriyas* or senses, and the eleventh, the mind that worked behind them,—through *Sama* and *Dama*, (*i. e.*, mental and physical restraint) and *Titiḳsha* (Endurance) so that *Uparati*, the withdrawal of the mind inward, might be complete. Concentration and absorption (*Dharana Dhyana* and *Samadhi*) of course followed thereafter, as he had practised these all along and even recently carried them to a high degree of perfection, *e.g.*, at the prickly-pear bush at Jejuri (June 1911). His *Samadhi* till he came to Sai Baba was, however, fitful and only negatively blissful; it removed all thoughts, cares and ideas of the world for a time but conveyed no distinct positive bliss. Under Sri Sai's guidance his *Samadi* was gradually changing into something new and enduring, —something positively blissful. But we must not anticipate. Before this consummation was achieved there were considerable effervescence and agitation in his mind and these must first be described.

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* God's images are mostly placed in the open, so that every one may have the opportunity to be reminded of his relation to God, and to worship Him in them.

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* *Cf.* B. Gita, Chap. XII, 13 to 20.

Sitting quiet, उगे मुगे involved certain passive elements. Banishing his old set of ideas, Maharaj had to remain often perfectly passive, maintaining as far as he could, a mental *tabula rasa* for the Guru to write his new lessons on. One has to divest himself not merely of the pride of learning but also the useless lessons learnt, before one derives full benefit by serving at the feet of a Sadguru. Full faith in the Guru kicks away the things one valued once, humbly receives every tittle of instruction or example furnished by the Guru, eagerly adopts it and acts upon it. Having nothing else to do, the disciple bestows all his time, energy and attention, sleeping or waking, on the Guru; and the Guru's image gets indelibly impressed on his heart, developing thereby, his love and receptivity.* When

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* *Cf.* मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयंतः परस्परम्
कथयन्थश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यंति च रमन्ति च ।
तेषां सततयुक्तनां भजतां प्रीति पूर्वकम्
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येनमामुपयांति ते ।
तेषामेवानु कंपार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

B. Gita X, 9—11.

Maharaj was in such mood, the Guru went on carefully burning up the old trash, preparing and improving the soil, and planting often unperceived, valuable seeds.* Some instances of such seedsowing we shall at once proceed to narrate.

Maharaj, like every other student of the Gita or even of Religion, knew theoretically the fact that God is everywhere and inside all beings as their very essence. Like so many other lecturers he also must have dilated upon it at Amraoti and rendered it ample lip-service. But those who have received grace know the dfference between the bare intellectual acceptance or even vehement asseveration of that truth and the blissful perception of it in the heart, the actual feeling that God is present before one in a partictlar object that is just then in one's presence. Sri Sai very early in the noviciate of Maharaj gave him this perception—working of course through the identity of God and the Guru which as an axiomatic truth had saturated the mind of Maharaj and all other sincere devotees at Shirdi.

Shortly after Maharaj arrived at the feet of his Guru, the latter who was veryfond of smoking his tobacco pipe (*chilm* is the vernacular name for it), one day made

Maharaj smoke it despite his objection* and then said :—

Sai :—Does any one go there, to the temple you reside in ?

Mah :—No. Generally none goes there.

Sai :—Never mind. I shall be coming there. But if I do, if I go over, *will you recognise me* and give me a *chilm* to smoke ?

Mah :—(Understanding the term *chilm*, in its literal sense only) Baba, I do not understand what exactly you are saying. Whence shall I get a *chilm* for you ?

Sai :—Very well. Very well.

Two or three months later—it was probably October 1911, Maharaj had started cooking his food. As it is the duty of all pious people to offer the food or part at least to God in the temple, in the universe, or in the Guru's residence, before tasting the remainder, Maharaj was taking some of the food to Sri Sai at the mosque. Meanwhile, a black dog that had been anxiously watching the cooking, wistfully looked at Maharaj and followed him part of the way. Maharaj did not give the dog anything but hoped to feed it on his return from his Guru. Suddenly however he changed his mind on the way and looked for the dog. But the dog had disappared. He then went to his Guru to offer the food.

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* Kashinath Maharaj as an orthodox Brahmin never smoked. Often he forbids his Brahmin devotees smoking.

Sai :—Why did you take the trouble to bring the food here, in the hot sun? I was sitting there, (*i. e.*, near your temple.)

Mah :—(in surprise) Where were you there, Baba?

Sai :—I sat there looking at you till the cooking was finished.

Mah :—Baba, there was none there except a black dog.

Sai :—Yes. Yes. I was that (dog)

Maharaj shed tears at his folly in not recognising his Guru, remembered the words of Sai at a previous interview about *recognising* and *chilm*, and resolved never to repeat his blunder.

The second day, he again went on with his cooking and anxiously looked for the black dog. Not finding it any where, he felt sure that he was avoiding the previous day's mistake. When the cooking was going on, a poor sudra begger was looking on leaning against a wall. The orthodox Brahminical mind of Maharaj was hurt by such impropriety and he promptly ordered the man off.

When the second day's food was taken to the Gutu, he was angry.

Sai :—How do you happen to come now ? Did I not tell you not to come here? Yesterday you did not give me food and today also you ordered me not to stand there and drove me away. Do not be bringing me your food (Naivedya) henceforth.

Mah :—Baba, where were you ?

Sai :—I was standing there leaning against the wall and you told me not to stand there.

Mah :—Oh! (drawing a long breath) was that you ?

Sai :—Yes. *I am in everything*—and *even beyond.** Wherever you may look, I am there.

Maharaj's grief and repentance knew no bounds. Thenceforward this impression went deep into his heart, that Sri Sai, as God, was really in everything and that he should never fail to realise it in his heart, in every-day life. This naturally made a very great change in his outlook as he began to feel of God (*i.e.*, Guru).

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* *Cf.* स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वा अत्यतिष्ठत दशांगुलम् which means,—He pervaded all the earth and transcended it:- *Purushasukta.*

> "Closer is he than breathing,
> Nearer than hands or feet,"—

nearer than the jugular vein.

CHAPTER XII

THREADS IN THE SHIRDI FABRIC

When Sri Sai promised anything, he spared no pains in its fulfilment. With his *Chitta-Samvit* or *Ritambhara P-ajna*, i. e., power to know what happens or happened or will happen any where and at any time, he could penetrate into the heart of any person and note how he progressed and what further steps were required. He wove the thread of *Viveka* (real knowledge) into the mind of his disciple, not merely by bestowing instructions, blessing his studies, and his *abhyasa* as mentioned above but also by impressing on the disciple his (Sai's) innumerable and marvellous qualities beaming out of his daily life, conduct and observations. We shall have to revert to this again, but before doing so, we may pick out another thread, *Vairagya* and trace its course in this Shirdi fabric.

Maharaj almost from childhood, either constitutionally or by his sorrows and sufferings, got accustomed to do without the numerous things that others, young and old, consider to be necessary for life. This withdrawal from attractive objects, named *Vairagya*, is absolutely essential for all religious progress not only because the ultimate goal of all practice, *viz.*, *Moksha*, Liberation, and *Siddhi*, Attainment of Realisation may be viewed as or termed the perfect withdrawal from all phenomenal objects into the noumenon, but also, because strength to achieve success, strength of body, strength of mind, purity of heart, independence, fearlessness, etc., are the direct results of such *Vairgaya*. Brahmacharya (celibacy) the first essential to all spiritual progress is but a form, a single instance, of this *Vairagya*. Maharaj was developing this virtue, this austerity (Tapas) of self-restraint voluntarily and involtntarilay all through life, and yet when he came to Sri Sai, there were many chapters of it he had not gone through. And his Guru would surely not let him off without taking him through a regular course of many of these exercises. Some instances of these tasks that the great taskmaster had set him will next be narrated.

Of all *tapas*, giving up food,—*i.e.*, fasting is declared (in the Santi Prava of Mahabharata) to be the highest. Starvation or going without food, in spite of one's desire for food, and efforts to get it is by far inferior in spiritual merit (especially as a discipline) to voluntary fasting. Yet even the involuntary process of starvation by making the system hardy, by inuring it to the absence of food for a long period, removes fear and infuses courage (*e. g.*, to face prolonged *Samadhi* for months) and by helping or forcing a man to make a virtue of necessity forms an excellent stepping stone to voluntary fasting, to real *Vairagya*. Similarly abstention from food, arising neither from lack of food nor from a purely spiritual vow, but from anger, despair or other pathological causes or other indifferent or objectionable motives and reasons may yet carry an aspirant (Sadhaka) in his onward spiritual path. Many forced marches of this sort, under the Guru's care, helped Maharaj on twords his goal.

Maharaj who even as a boy felt it delicate to stay at home without earning, to be a burden on the family, the other members of which were toiling hard for their daily bread, found his position at Shirdi very irksome almost from the beginning. For a few months he was a paying boarder at the Shirdi hotel. One day the Guru asked him for (*dakshina*) a gift ; and Maha-though not without great hesitation, vacillation and fear at the prospect of a penniless life amidst strangers, gave up every pie he had—to the intense delight of the Guru. यस्यानुग्रहामिच्छामि तस्य सर्व हराम्यहम् *. God declares that in giving his grace to a devotee, he deprives him of every possession and all attractions—as these hold down the soul to the earth and prevent the upward gaze which dwells upon and absorbs or is absorbed in Him. Having parted with all cash, Maharaj put himself on short commons; and this led to constipation and bleeding piles. Maharaj disgusted with this necessity for food tried to live on doles of grain, etc. which some admirers daily gave him, but was soon induced to accept free board at a boarding house. Some months later, the intense jealousy roused by the Guru's favour to Maharaj (with perhaps other reasons) led to the refusal of further free board. One day about the end of June 1912, it was intimated to Maharaj, as he sat at his plate, that from the morrow no food would be given to him.

The effect of the intimation was electric. This utter humiliation in the presence

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* *Cf.* Thomas A. Kempis, Bk. III, Ch. 53 (1) (5) & (6).

of the other boarders cut Maharaj to the quick. He had no wish to taste the ungraciously offered food even that day, He fiercely abused his host for having taken him away from the happy meals he had on the doles he was formerly receiving, and went back to his temple of Khondaba, like Achilles to his tent, in high dudgeon. This incident so powerfully convulsed him that he vowed he would never taste food again. It is food that made a man fawn, cringe, bow and be a dependant; and he resolved to attain independence at once by loathing and rejecting food—even if it should come to him unasked. This angry fast worked a marvellous change in him, and reminds one of the fast and penance started by the Kshatriya Viswamitra in high dudgeon at being beaten in his own game of war by an unarmed Brahmin. Maharaj refused during that week all solid or liquid food offered by friends or admirers and gave it away to pigs and dogs; and he was left to his own fate. The Guru hewever interfered and by his order Maharaj began to take a little food sometimes but yet had long spells of fast frequently.

This incident of July 1912, had its effects not merely in improving his powers of endurance and his *vairagya*, but had also ulterior effects affecting his God-realisation.

The starvation had its definite effect. Before this incident he had rare visions. But after it, he was frequently in a dreamy state. He was frequently unconscious what he was doing, where he was and what were his external surroundings; and when he faced them, things appeared to him topsyturvy, *e. g.*, the far appeared near and near far. To him food swallowed already would appear to be in the mouth still. Food looked liked excerta; small articles appeared big. If there was no supervision, this might have endangered his life and reason. But being under the wings of Sri Sai, he passed through his 'Bhramishtgvasta' and 'Unmathavasta' *i.e.*, states resembling the crazy and insane states, not only without any such danger but also with distinct gain of experience, ideas, perceptionss, powers and aptitudes, the planting of which these states specially appear to have facilitated.

In these states, Maharaj began to have many visions several of which had a clear moral or spiritual import, and he communicated these to others either at that time or years later. His admirers noted his wonderful fasting, and they set it down as evidence of Sai's grace. In his abnormal condition, he menifested many peculiarities which also were at once ascribed to the Guru's favour. For instance, when he began a terrible course from Sankranti 1913 (Jan 1913) of not eating food at all, which he kept on for about a year, he had become lank and lean and yet he went about grinding flour in a quern, carrying and spreading metal for road work, drawing the plough, etc. His pulse was only 40 to the minute on 15-4-1913 when Dr. Chidambaram Pillai examined it and went so low as 20 to the minute three months later. Yet, all the while he was performing manual labour—gratis of course. He was sustained in all this by his abnormal nervous and psychic condition and by special faith in his Guru. In these extraordinary phenomena, these Shirdi devotees saw the fulfilment of the "full grace" that was evidently having its fruition in investing Maharaj with divine powers and divine immunity from harm.

CHAPTER XIII

THE INSTALLATION

On Ashada Poornima of 1913, Sri Sai established his chief land-mark in carrying out his high design by placing Maharaj "in the open," "throughly colored." On that sacred day of Gnrupoornima, he sent his devotee, Chandrabai, who was physically and mentally strong, to Khandoba temple with the order, that Maharaj, willy-nilly, must formally and devoutly worshipped that day with Arati, etc., in the same way as he, Sai, was worshipped. When that bold lady entered Khandoba temple that place was very dirty and stinking, for it was seldom cleaned as Maharaj who seldom bathed or removed dirt from from his own body forbade people going in to clean the temple. Dirt or no dirt, foul smell or sweet smell, Chandrabai was bent on her task and she sat with her materials for worship in front of Maharaj and proceeded to massage his feet, as Sri Sai's feet were daily massaged. Maharaj was surprised, protested, and said —"Do not touch my feet please, do not come here. Go away."

But Chandra bai paid no heed to his words and went on with her massaging service. Two gentlemen happened to approach the temple at this time and Chandrabai got bolder and said that she had gone there by Sai Baba's orders.

Mah :—What is his order ?

Cha :—Order ? He has ordered me to do pooja, *i. e.*, worship, to you. That is why I brought these articles and I have brought also *Naivedya*, food offering, since you have eaten nothing for a long time

To day is Guru Poornima, (day for worshipping the Guru) and you have to allow me to do my pooja to you.

So saying she seized his foot, in order to wash it with water and milk and to place sandal paste, flowers, colouring powder, etc., on it. Withdrawing his foot, Maharaj said,—

"Do not touch my feet. I will not tolerate it. I will not allow you to do anyrhing. Get away."

Cha :—You will only beat me. Beat me or do anything else you please. I am determined to carry out Baba's orders.

Saying this she pulled out the foot that he had withdrawn under his blanket. Maharaj angrily waved his fist at her and withdrew his foot again. But again she pulled it out and spoke out loudly thus :—

Cha :—Are these feet yours ? They are not yours. 'Your' body is not yours. Why do you claim or exercise any right or properety in this body ? Your feet and your body have become ours and belong to the whole world. I will not listen to you whatever you may do,

Maharaj in his anger failed to note that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, Heaven declares its loftiest truths and that this lady had been made the instrument to teach him renunciation (*Vairagya*) of a very high order—not merely renouncing one's property or comfort but renouncing the selfish notion that one's body is intended to serve one's own purposes only. Maharaj was still trying to withdraw his foot. She then called out to the two male spectators to come in and hold Maharaj. Knowing Maharaj's strength and readiness to strike people when provoked, they dared not approach him. Left to her own resources, this strong and valient lady pulled out and held the required foot with one hand and washed, pasted and worshipped it with the other. She then placed flowers, etc., over his head and took her cup of milk (*Naivedya*) to his lips. Maharaj dashed it down, and got up.

Mah :—Oh ! Chandrabai, are you justified in doing this ? Why, have you come here to trouble me ?

Cha :—"You have no business now to talk. You must allow us to do what we want. Despite all your protests, this worship will go on. Sai Baba has inaugurated it through me this Guru-poornima day : Is your protest going to stop it ?

Mah :—I am weary of this stuff. Get away. Do not waste any more time here.

Chandrabai went away, and did not repeat her worship.

Thus was the *Pratishta*, *Kumbhabhisheka* or installation of this image performed.* The comic side of its starting, against his will, appealed to Maharaj later on. He himself once (1924) likened it, in a lecture, to the story of the man who was made a doctor, against his will. When a Brahmin stranged visited a village, a cunning resident fancied that the newcomer *must* be a doctor, despite his denial which should only be attributed to modesty or shyness, and sedulously circulated the rumour of an able doctor having arrived in the village whose modesty required constant pressure to overcome it. Numerous villagers came up to the newcomer and applied this pressure so constantly that the Brahmin, finding no other way of escape from the situation, "admitted" his "knowledge" and prescribed holy ashes, mixed occasionally with powdered ginger, etc., achieved many cures thereby and became in fact a medical practitioner.

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* Despite many breaks for long period; Maharaj was being worshipped off and on, at first by very few. From 1920 the number of worshippers increased and from 1934 decreased.

Here indeed is a case of greatness (nay Divinity) thrust upon a person! But was he unworthy of it? It was the aim of Sai to render him fully worthy. Let us see how Sai carried out the rest of his programme.

CHAPTER XIV

BHRAMISHTA AVASTA; VISIONS AND HALLUCINATIONS

God uses evil to produce good, the impure to produce the pure, the bitter and acid to produce the sweet, the low and material to produce the noble and spiritual. Maharaj got into an abnormal state of body and mind the powers of which were put to a severe strain by starvation, exposure, etc. But the overwatching Sai took care to see that on this rock, this precious vessel carrying the future welfare of myriads within itself, was not wrecked, and by the turn he gave to events turned even misfortunes into gain. This is what one is is obliged to conclude by noticing how Maharaj weathered the storm of his *Bhramishta Avasta*, and how he derived benefits from his strange experiences.

As stated already, Maharaj since January 1913, got into an almost continous fit of

Anna Dwesha, "*aliment-phobia*". The very sight of food caused in him a strong revulsion. It smelt and looked like excreta. If he put a bit into his mouth, he could not easily gulp it—it stuck in his throat. When it was still in the mouth, he fancied he had already eaten food. If by chance he had swallowed a bit, he felt as though his stomach was over-loaded. Hence the food that was daily brought and placed before him, he would always throw away to dogs, pigs, birds and other creatures.

Now all these appear to one as unmitigated evil. But, in fact, this darkest cloud had its silver lining, and by Sai's blessings he reached or at times stumbled upon the sweet uses of adversity. Mostly he felt these experiences bewildering and at times, quite harrowing ; and then, he went to Sri Sai meeting him on the way to the Lendi, as a babe to its mother, and Sai always consoled him with the remarks, "I am always with you and you need not fear. The more you suffer now, the happier and more excellent is your future. You in one scale pan,....the world in the other. You are (going to be) naked (*Avadhuta*). Hundreds are (*i.e.*, will be) rushing to take your *darshan*."

His (*i.e.*, Kashinath Maharaj's) endurance and with it the power to sympathise with and help others in their misery—so necessary for a Sadguru—were through these experiences attaining such wonderful dimensions that these alone made many men (*e.g.*, the Civil Surgeon at Wardha) revere him as a divine person. In his phycical and psychic condition, the exalted sentiments and ideas of Gita, and other works (that he continued to study during his lucid intervals) would flash on him and come home to him as patent. axiomatic truths and remould his nature. For example having no hunger or desire for food, it was easy for him to expand his self, to feel first a delight in the dogs, pigs, assess or other creatures eating the food or drinking the coffee that he had discarded and left outside, and thereafter to feel that he, in the form of these creatures, was having the pleasure of tasting food. आत्मवत् सर्वभूतानि *i.e.*, "Treat all creatures as your self" was not only possible but quite natural to a man, freed from all wants; and he could afford to be more contented, altruistic, spmpathetic, and independent than Diogenes in his tub. By his Guru's grace, the ordinary consequences of starvation, or temporary blindness caused by exposing the eyes for too long a time to the severe glare of the noonday sun were interpreted either immediately or at a much later period, as vehicles or symbols of rare and subtle philosophical and spiritual truths. We shall cite some of such instances.

One day at noon, probably early in 1913, he held water in both his palms and in offering it to the Sun God, as *arghya*, he happened to look into the image of the sun in the water and kept on looking, till his eyes got quite dazed and blinded. The usual consequences described in works of Ophthalmology followed. Not only did the sun's image and the sun look black to him but nearer objects also such as a lighted lamp close to him in the temple, he could not see; and he had to grope about as blindmen do. Then fancies seized him that the sun had got into his head, and suddenly solar rays appeared at night to be shining into his eyes. He feared that these were symptoms of approaching death, went into the village and asked a few of his friends to help him with fomentations or any other device they could think of. As everything that happened to him was put down by his friends and admirers to be due to Sri Sai's grace, this also was considered to come under the same category. Suspecting starvation might be the root cause of the affliction, they gave him some warm gruel. But when he tried to swallow it, it could not pass down his throat and he had to spit it out. Returning to the temple at night with K. Dixit to keep him company, he tried to sleep but failed. Before him floated small specks of light which were considered to be *'Paramanus'* the primæval atoms of which the entire universe is said to be composed. But the chief benefit out of this affliction was his beginning to see circles springing up suddenly and expanding in front of him, coming near his body and disappearing. Later on whenever he saw edifying visions, they were mostly enclosed in these circles, and they came like cinema pictures on the screen, and finally vanished taking away the circle also.

If the above incident related to physics, and took him to the ultimate analysis of the constitution of matter, another vision carried him into metaphysics; and enabled him to view and study the relation of himself (Jivà) to the universe (Jagat).

One day at about 2 P.M.,—after he had endured prolonged starvation, he saw a vision. Suddenly the earth, the sky and the sun were revolving round themselves, many miles off from him. He stood outside these, and watched their revolution. The whirling cosmos came gradually nearer and nearer to him—all the while, diminishing in size and finally vanished, like a whirlwind at his side or into him. But in fact there was no wind or whirlwind at that time. He could not make out where he was or on what he rested to be able to see the entire world and the universe at a distance from him. And even in the vision, he felt surprised at this. The vision lasted for fifteen or thirty minutes and disappeared. Maharaj treated it as a demonstration of the physical fact that all matter is in motion (भ्रम)and as a suggestion or indication of the spiritual truth behind it that a person must get over his (जगद्भ्रम) *i.e.*, the whirl and illusion of the world, by getting beyond it, *i.e.*, realising himself as not included within it. The effect of the vision on himself was forcibly and indelibly to impress him with the truths that the physical universe (जगत) with all its perpetual revolution and change, is not permanent and therefore not real—for, it appears, exists for a time, and ultimately disappears ; that it emanates from him, and re-merges in him; that he is really outside and beyond all this seeming universe: that he is changeless, and eternal, while the world is evanescent ; and that, of course his body which is part of the material world, is not he.

Naturally, passing beyond Realism into something like subjective Idealism, this marked the beginning of his higher spiritual flights during this (*Avasta*) state ; and hence this incident is referred to in Upasani Lilamrita (or memoirs of Upasani Baba) as marking his "Jnanodaya" or the beginnings of Self-Realisation.

Again several of the experiences which Maharaj had at this time, he considered as those of the "borderland" or extra-cosmic, (some people may term these, "supersensuous," or even "supramental") and some he considered as illustrative of the *Mahavakyas* and therefore as gateways to Advaitic realisation. Of such high and subtle matters, this humble* writer feels great diffidence to write anything; and so he contents himself in this introductory brochure, with the faint hints (especially about Maharaj's, *i.e.*, Sri Upasani Baba's Self-realisation) that may be gathered from the very few incidents and remarks set out herein—especially in the succeeding pages. With a little more confidence, he proceeds to deal with a few of Maharaj's experiences in this state that gave the latter, a good moral foundation, on which alone the structure of Sadguruship can be built.

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*It is only self-realisers that can certify to others being self-realisers, according to Ashtavakra Gita, Ch. XIV, Verse 4.

अन्तर्विकल्प शून्यस्य बहिस्स्वच्छन्द चारिणः ।
भ्रान्तस्येव दशास्तस्ता स्तादृशा एव जानते ॥

CHPTER VX.

CONQUEST OF DESIRE

Man, half brute half angel, has arrived at his present state, after numerous eons of evolution. To maintain and develop his physical frame, his mind, and even his society, he had to struggle fiercely like the brute (he was), "red in tooth and claw", to build up strong individualistic traits which were gradually supplemented and perfected by altruistic and even unworldly traits (albeit, based at first on weakness, fear, self-interest, etc.) raising him to the angelic level. In this conquest of the lower nature Religion has played a great part; and consequently we find that in all religions (or at least in all great religions) the primary emphasis is on the subjugation of man's lower nature *i. e.* the conquest of the great "URGES" in life, which despite the great service they still render to keep man alive and progressive, are yet felt to be essentially brutish and hindrances to his attaining "God—hood". Without attempting to give an exhaustive catalogue of these "URGES" we shall take just a few common items,—those known popularly in India as अहंकार, कांचन, कामिनी; *i. e.* Self-assertion or Egotism; Love of possessions; and Sex urge, and deal with them here. No one ever became a true saint or Sat-Purusha who failed to conquer these "taints of blood;" and this chapter is an attempt to show what experiences of Maharaj in his Bhramishtavasta helped him in the conquest of these urges.

One evening, as Maharaj was seated within his temple performing his evening Sandhya or prayer, he saw his grandfather, Gopala Sastri (who had died two decades earlier) standing outside the temple door and extending his arm, as though he wished to draw Maharaj's attention). Sastri then slowly pronounced the word "Ahammadnagar". Astonished at this apparition and unable to understand why it should pronounce the name of the district in which the temple and Shirdi were situated, Maharaj cast an inquiring look at the figure. Sastri spoke the same word a second time, but split it into its three component parts, slowly emphasising each thus—Aham; Madan; Gar. As still Maharaj could not catch their import, Sastri flourished his hand and spoke yet louder; and emphasised each of the three parts thus: Aham, Madan, Gar, and vanished out of sight. At once the meaning of the words flashed upon him:—

'Aham' means, 'Ego' or 'Egotism'.

'Madan' means, 'Lust' or the "Sex urge".

'Gar' means, "Poison."

Put together, the whole phrase 'Aham Madan Gar' denotes that Egotism and the sex urge are really poison, *i. e.*, deadly in their effect on the soul in its aspiration to saintliness.

He realised also that his grandfather in his extreme kindness and sympathy with his grandson's attempt to drop all his waywardness and turn into a saint ("dead to his self") had appeared to tell him in this very impressive way (punning on the name of the district, to impress the truth on his memory that he must completely conquer his sexual cravings and his egotism (including in it, selfishness). And tears of gratitude flowed from the eyes of Maharaj. He went on frequently repeating to himself the word "Ahammadnagar," intently thinking on the above meaning. But the villagers of Shirdi that heard him believed that this was one of his "mad pranks".

Conquest of the sex urge is a topic that interests a very large class of people—including even those who regard it as undesirable, in the interests of society. Putting these last aside for the present, it may be worth-while to deal with two other classes, those who consider the conquest impossible, especially for persons in their own condition, and those who consider it injurious to the individual, should he succeed in his efforts to suppress the sex urge entirely. What happened to Maharaj, (as may be gleaned from Upasani Lilamrita and some talks with Upasani Baba) may be very instructive to consider in this connection. If he is found to be without the craving and if his physical or psychic condition is nothing to deplore, than the above-mentioned classes (or some of them at any rate) may abandon their view that escape from the sex urge is impossible and undesirable.

For curing one of this craving, as for curing scorpion sting, numerous physical expedients have been suggested; among which hardly one is to be found that is always completely successful or always a complete failure. To take the purely physical prescriptions for this conquest, reduction of quantity of food, simplification of the diet, avoidance of aphrodisiacs, *e. g.*, onion and betel, have been suggested. But as stated already none of these can be depended on. The mental recipes may be summed up as—the avoidance of everything smutty, *i.e.*, avoidance of all sights, sounds and other contacts, either clearly libidinous or suggestive of such thoughts,—through cinemas, dramas, village plays *(tamasha)* pictures, songs, books, gatherings, friendships, proximity, or other activities and states of life. Exercise of will-power to keep oneself pure seems to be the only course—aided of course, by avoidance of idleness, by prayer, by holy company, by regular and good habits by safe diet, and a proper mode of life, including in this, the encircling of oneself by strong public or social opinion—, for ridding one of the tyranny of the sex urge.

Maharaj had been adopting several of these steps before he reached Somnath. His subsequent health (with its spectre of sudden death haunting him every minute) one may easily infer, would suffice to snuff out his sex urge. But to make assurance doubly sure, Sai stamped out all lingering traces of it at the Shirdi probation; and Maharaj says that his Guru rendered him then and thence-forward physically impopotent and mentally freed from the sex craving. In this, as in several other matters of spiritual importance, there is literally no conquest or achievement by Maharaj but the conquest and achievement are effected by Sri Sai for him and through his (Maharaj's) body and mind. Truly the only thing wanted of Maharaj was that he should sit quiet at Khandoba temple at Shirdi, and

Sri Sai was achieving every required step and virtue by his inscrutable and irresistible power. निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् *i.e.* 'Stand thou merely as a stalking horse' said this Krishna to his disciple 'and I will do the rest.'

But the removal of Maharaj's sex urge was but a small plank in a more ambitious programme of forgetting differences. He had to be taught to forget the difference between male and female, as unessential and as pertaining to the body which of course he was not (—the spirit has no sex). We may proceed to note what visions and efforts helped him on in this.

One day Maharaj saw a circle and within it the whole of a vision was enacted. He found himself suddenly seized by two girls aged about sixteen and tied to a huge sky-scraping column in the middle of an extensive plain. He begged hard to be released, but these and numerous other girls who were playing in the lawn took no note of his complaint. At last he was released by a couple of girls on condition that he should lose his sex and become a woman like themselves. He doubted if that was a possibility. But they knew better and succeeded in effecting the conversion, by putting on him glass bangles—a set of bangles which rendered him a woman for ever, Then they released him, gathered round him, and each told him a moral tale, folded it into a packet and dropped it into a leather bag—*i e*, Maharaj himself. The vision ceased. He says that he remembers these stories and feels at times just like a female, though his body continues unaltered throughout; and that he is then the wife of God, an *Akhanda Sowbhagyavati*.

This attempt to obliterate the memory of one's sex at least for a time is a common practice with saints. Readers of the life of the Paramahamsa of Dakshineshwar would remember how at times he fancied himself a female, dressed as a woman, acted as one, lived and moved with pure women, etc. Sri Sai used, occasionally, to feign himself a female and to act out the part fully would use terminations of the feminine gender that females use in their talk when referring to themselves, imitate their tone, etc. His disciple Kashinath seems to have gone some steps further, Even during his noviciate, he feigned himself a woman, wanted his lady visitors to give him turmeric, *i.e*,, yellow coloured *rouge* to paint himself with and bangles to wear, and asked "Where is my baby?" This, of course, furnished merriment to the villagers who set it down as due to mid summermadness. Later, after going to Sakuri, he occasionally wore ladies' cloth, *i. e., saree.* He has always moved freely with pure and pious lady devotees, His dress is slightly different from that of other ascetics and of householders. Instead of tying on a Koupina (cod piece) or a loin-cloth, he carries about him loosely some two yards of sack cloth with which he dexterously covers himself to avoid indecent exposure, as may be seen from his pictures in this book. Further information as to his dress, etc., though available, is not set down here as nonconformity to current sartorial conventions is neither a cause nor proof of spiritual eminence, and has little to do with the forgetting of differences.

But a reader may ask, Is Kashinath Upasani Maharaj free from sex cravings? This is of course an important matter to settle. A discussion on this matter may appear irreverent to some and indelicate to others. But in view of the recent campaign in some Poona and Bombay papers (attributing to him not merely sexual craving but also sexual immorality,) it will be mere ostrich-like fatuity to blink the question. When the axe is sought to be laid to the root of even ordinary respect for him by the above campaign, how can any objection on the score of irreverence arise? It seems desirable frankly to face the discussion, The objection on the score of delicacy is hard to understand, as on the same ground Maharaj's "nudity" and freely moving with both sexes also should not be mentioned or considered. So let us at once face the question.

Any one trying to view this question without any prejudices or prepossessions would be struck with the fact that hundreds—it may be even thousands—of people of position, respectability, culture and intellect, of both sexes and of various ages, have moved closely with Upasani Maharaj and have not come across a single instance of either his misbehaviour or even a leaning in that direction. It would require extraordinary cunning and self-repression to hide such a voice from so many eyes that have watched him for about two decades. Should there be some low or sordid desire deep down in his heart, even that would surely affect the devotees, (or some of them) who derive their frequent inspiration from him. On the other hand the experience of his devotees is that Baba not merely preaches Brahmacharya (sexual abstinence) to both sexes, not merely sets the example but actually gives them also an inner strength and courage to carry out their vows of abstinence. Some of them go further and show how, even in the case of their relation with their own wives, this guru has so developed their vision that sex desires are crushed out. Several credible witnesses have furnished this writer with their statements to the above effect; and other respectable evidence is forthcoming. But it does not seem necessary to go further into this matter, and one can safely reject the above-mentioned aspersions against this aged saint.

But surely, some may say, impotence can only serve to lower one socially, intellectually and even spiritually, and is not a thing to admire or copy. Nevertheless, it is a fact that a few, very few, are made "eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake;" and in their case their state, though not an example for the general run to copy, has to be noticed, accounted for, and commented on. This state rendered Maharaj more like a stone image, rendered the coloring "inside and out" more impressive, and fitted him to be "in the open", for the work thrust upon him by Sri Sai. Men and women place unlimited confidence in such a person and accelerate thereby their own spiritual progress.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONQUEST OF KANCHANA

In the last chapter, we dealt mainly with the conquest of *Kamini* or the sex urge. A few words may now be said about the conquest of *Kanchana*, *i. e.*, love of wealth or possessions, under the guidance of the Guru.

The abject poverty and beggary to which Maharaj had been accustomed till his twenty-sixth year must have planted deep within him the idea that wealth was essential to the maintenance of life and to its happiness—though alongside of it, the ability to get on without it may have endowed him with increased power to repress the desire for wealth. His successes at Amraoti and Nagpur and subsequent failure at Gwalior, etc., must have confirmed the idea. It is very hard work to erase such impressions.

Sri Sai's order to sit quiet and to deal with none involved utter indifference to wealth, and to all worldly things. Maharaj had nothing to keep locked up. The little money he had deposited with his friend Madhava Rao, Sai was particular in taking away by asking for *dakshina*. Even Maharaj's cloth was torn and had many holes in it. When his brother sent a new cloth and that was brought to Kandoba temple, it was stolen away before it could be used. Sai evidently did not allow him to get beyond the possession of unenviable rags—so that Maharaj's mind might be fixed on God (Guru) with undivided attention. As in spite of all these, old *vasanas* of love of wealth would be deeply ingrained in the neophyte's mind, the guru utilised some of the visions to burn these up. Such love of wealth and other worldly tendencies constitute one's sinful nature; and every Brahmin is at least twice a day called upon to expel that nature in the course of his morning and evening prayer. The *mantra* for that purpose is called *Papapurusha Nirasana* or *Aghamarshana mantra*: The idea is that sin is expelled thereby. Few people pronouncing the *mantra* see the expulsion physically. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa once saw that corresponding to his body there was a black figure, and that out of his body arose a radiant God-like figure, armed with heavenly weapons who at once attacked and slew the black figure (Sin) and thus rid him of his sin. Maharaj had, similar to this, the following vision:—

One day he had rambled and gone into an old building in which he found Sai Baba seated. Sai Baba beckoned to Maharaj to approach him and bring his ear close to the guru's mouth, so that *Upadesa* (sacred instruction) may be whispered into it. As Maharaj approached and tried to listen to to the guru, a shabby figure exactly like himself stood behind him and pulled him off saying "Don't listen to Sai Baba but listen to me." This occured more than once, dispite the guru's warning that the shabby fellow should not be heeded. Noting the continued interruption, Sai Baba stepped down from his high seat, held the interrupter by his tuft of hair, pushed and beat him all over the body, shoved him outside the building, carried him to an adjoining dirty stream and burnt him on a pyre. All the while Maharaj identifying himself with that man interceded on his behalf and finally complained to Sai Baba.

Maharaj :—"What is this! The person you cast out is I. Why have you persecuted me?

Sai Baba :—That was you, no doubt. Who denies it? But you were in that Sin-form (*Papa Rupa*). I have destroyed him. You are now free from sin. *By our united efforts, there are many things to be achieved in the future.* How can that be done, if sin remains?

Maharaj :—What were you whispering in my ear?

Sai Baba :—Now there is nothing to tell you. The obstruction in your way has been removed. You will yourself understand everything without any words from me.

Sai Baba then disappeared. Soon after that, Sai Baba's guru bowed down and placed his head on Maharaj's feet. While Maharaj was horrified at this improper elevation of himself over his guru's guru, he saw another figure (not the *PapaPurusha*) of himself watching this scene. Then the vision vanished.

Another vision that Maharaj saw. dealt with this same question of his escaping from Sin and Hell and obtaining higher light. The vision ran thus.

Sri Sai had taken him on to a huge pile of buildings and left him there. Going on exploring the vicinity, Maharaj stood by a dark abyss, whence a black hand came out, seized his feet tight, and tried to pull him down. "Hands off" cried Maharaj. "Who are you? Why do you drag me? Let go, else I will report you to Sai Baba." At this mention of Sai's name, his feet were released. He then learnt in the vision itself that the black abyss and black hand were Hell, that it would seize any one who carelessly came near; and that it was a mistake on his part to have gone so near as to tempt Hell. Then he was offered a lamp, and doubted if he should accept it. At the same time he noticed with surprise the Sun and Moon in juxta-position in the horizon. Sri Sai then appeared and told him that the light of the Sun and Moon were unnecessary for them, that theirs was higher light. Sai asked him to accept the offered lamp as it would light him and protect him everywhere (itself needing no protection or oil, etc., at his hands). "If you have that lamp" said Sai "you will never be obstructed. You will escape all obstacles. And you will give light to hundreds in the future." Accordingly Maharaj accepted the light.

The reader will note the obvious fact that these visions are allegorical. Whe-one in the Bhramishta state gets ideasn often these are transformed into living cha' racters, moving and acting so as to produce those ideas.

Sai told Maharaj at one time, "I take away half your head and give you half of mine." Maharaj had later a vision of some ruffians who came and cut his head off, scooped out all its contents, ate them up and ran away. Maharaj had doubtless been told that he must see things— not with the fleshy eye but with the interior of eye to obtain real knowledge. Maharaj later had a vision of his being decoyed by a woman who professed to lead him somewhere to show him some fun, and suddenly blinded him. The woman gouged out both his eyes and said "What do you care for those eyes? What will you do with such eyes? It is better not to see with them. After some time, you will see much—nay everything."

Reverting to the rooting out of love of money (which has been declared to be the root of all evil), one more vision may be mentioned, which was as follows;—

Sai Baba took Maharaj to some mysterious place and showed him a heap of rupees about 225 feet long, 120 feet broad, and 4 feet high. Over that on a costly lace cloth was a princely bed with bolsters. Reclining on this was a richly dressed and gaily ornamented person. Sai Baba asked Maharaj to observe that man.

Maharaj :—Who is that?

Sai Baba :—Have you not recognised him? It is *you*. Your body of sin is gone. This is your Merit-body (*Punya-Purusha*).

Then Sai told him pointing to those rupees—"All these rupees are ours." Sai showed him a big room full of rupees and said,

"There are hundreds and thousands of such houses filled completely with rupees. All those are ours, You will come to know all this by yourself."

Then Sai and Maharaj left the house and the vision with the circle in which it came vanished.

Evidently Sai adopted in these the method of curing love of possessions, by impressing the sub-conscious mind of Maharaj with the sense of possessing superabandant wealth—thus cloying him with surfeit.

CHAPTER XVII

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The terms, Self-knowledge, Self-Realisation, Illumination and Jnana (which are said to be synonymous) convey widly different meanings to various people—in accordance with their views as to God and Religion. The Uddhava Mutt, to which Sri Upasani Maharaj's family belongs, professes Adi Shankaracharya's Advaitism in respect of its metaphysics and follows the practice (and the implications thereof) of Sri Ramanujacharya's Visishtadwaitism for its religious worship, with at least one modification. The Mutt and its members liberally adopt all forms of worship that prevailed among its adherents when it was started; they are catholic enough to admit Siva and Vinayaka, Dattatreya, Khandoba and Masoba, and Shani and Tukaram with a host of tutelary deities into their pantheon along with Sri Maha Vishnu's forms while the southern followers of Sri Ramanuja appear to severely exclude the former and kindred gods and confine themselves to the last. On account of this blend in the Uddhava Mutt, their ideas of the religious goal and stages towards such goal appear strange (at least in some respects and for a time) alike to the Advaitins and Visishtadvaitins of the South. But after all there is much that is common between these various schools and it is proposed to confine this chapter, as far as possible, to those elements of God Realisation and Self-Knowledge, on which there is substantial agreement between these schools.

Bhagavat Gita, Chapter XIII. in defining Jnana and including in that definition, mere *Sadhanas* or means such as "resort to solitude" creates some difficulties for one who wishes to get a systematic or 'scientific' grasp of the subject. Rejecting the attractions and distractions arising from the body, concentrating the mind on God, after withdrawing it from worldly objects, Loving God, Serving humanity and all creatures with equanimity and a sense of justice, attaining of Samadhi while centered on God,—these seem to be the basic ideas of Jnana, Illumination, or at any rate, of the Path of Illumination according to all schools.

Maharaj imbibed, very early in life, lofty ideas of religion at home. In addition to these we find that he was, even in his boyhood, able to dissociate the self from the body. No doubt he harped over much on the supposed antagonism between the body and the soul and even fancied for a time that the main object of living was dying—dying nobly, *e. g.*, by *prayopavesha.* When advancing years brought on a sense of responsibility and this in turn took him into a lucrative profession, he adopted the current views of the utility of wealth, learning, life, and the body. It is in such a mood that he went out in quest of wealth and later, of health—in dead earnest after losing both. It is a person with such a mentality that Sri Sai picked up, and by

Sai's grace, health was immediately restored and arrangements were set on foot by which an abundant and perennial flow of wealth (albeit for religious and spiritual purposes) was ensured. After providing health and wealth, the great and wise Sai, did not of course fail to endow his ardent disciple with other items, especially the highest item of well being, *viz*,, wisdom, and the ability to attend to his spiritual work while facing wealth.

Wealth is harmful, if it engrosses and absorbs one's heart and soul. If it is treated as an humble servant and kept away from one's heart it can be of great service. Sri Sai showed this to be the true doctrine, every day of his life. Hundreds daily flocked to worship Sai Mowla and poured their pecuniary and other gifts at his feet. But as he was never attached to these, the esteem in which he was held was unaffected. He showed his devotees, how wealth was but the outermost fringe of one's environment, and the body also an outer fringe of one's real self, how the self alone was worth caring for; and how the self was best served by placing it at the feet of God. Maharaj learnt—rather forcibly realised—these and other truths, and in his turn imparted them to those who flocked to his feet.

What is this self that is not the bare body or its senses, mind or intellect? What innermost kernel of "mine" and "I" is it? Life after life, body after body is taken up by the soul for its incarnations as it courses through time, but what is it in itself and apart from the qualities possessed by each *Karanasarira* that it takes up and throws away? To this puzzle, Maharaj got an answer in the last vision mentioned above.

The Guru, who had shown Maharaj, that he (the Guru) was not anything that could be confined within the eight spans of flesh, bone and blood that people styled "Sai" and that he had inhabited other bodies in the past, went further, and showed the disciple his (*.i. e.*, latter's) previous incarnations.* He seemed to say with Sri Krishna :

बहूनिमे व्यतीतानी जन्मानी तव चार्जुन
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परंतप।

i. e., "Oh Arjuna, many are the births I have had and you also have had. I know them all—but you do not."

Even inside any one body taken up in one incarnation, Sri Sai's dissecting knife had cut up two parts. He showed Maharaj that he was composed of two parts, the holy (*Punya*) and the unholy (*Papa*). He took up first this disciple's sinful half (*Papa Purusha*), with which he had unfortunately identified himself in such a way as to bar his upward spiritual progress, and killed it telling him—, that that *was* he, but was still severable from him and intended to be severed. Next Sai showed the disciple the higher part of his self, the holy or *Punya Purusha*, and roused Maharaj's inquiry into the self thus:

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*In one of these, Sai was the discipie of Maharaj.

Maharaj :—If this figure is my form as *Punya Purusha* and the other figure (also resembling me) which you destroyed was my *Papa Purusha*, then *who am I*?

Sai Baba :— तू यांच्या पलिकडला आहेस व मी जो तोच तूं।

You are beyond these two. That which constitutes 'me' constitutes 'you', *i.e.*, you are myself.

Here is the *Mahavakya*; and by the Guru's grace he would realise its innermost sense in due time.

Besides the previously declared identity of interests, arising from mutual obligations for a thousand years, Sai now lifts the curtain on the soul and shows Maharaj the strict and literal truth of what he had said again and again.—"There is no difference between you and me." The disciple on whom this lightning flash came could just glimpse the situation and note that separate personality is a myth. At once, the light was gone. The curtain had dropped. Sri Krishna hoodwinked his mother (after showing her his *Visvarupa*, *i.e.*, Universal form by opening his mouth and asking her to gaze within it) by sporting as her child, has a helpless and dear little boy that required her help and her caresses. Sai did the same, and almost in the same breath, after mentioning the unity of the soul, added "All these *rupees* (*i.e.*, heaps of millions and billions over which the *Punya Purusha* sat) "are ours." Only a Pisgah sight of the highest realisation transcending personality is possible, when the lower urges espicially the desire for possession, etc., are yet unconquered.. After *Vasana Kshaya*—and not earlier—comes Jnana.

CHAPTER XVIII

PSYCHIC POWER

It is matter of common knowledge that those who are withdrawing their minds from various worldly distractions and concentrating them on specific forms (*e. g.*, gods), sounds *e. g. mantras*, etc., attain various *siddhis* or powers. Chapter III, Sutras 16 to 56 of Patanjali Yogasutras show how a Yogi obtains powers which range from more reading of men's minds to the attainment of *Kaivalya* or Liberation. Not infrequently these powers manifest themselves in the course of Sadhana to one who never tried to obtain them or even cared for them and at the end of the course, the perfection of Jnana or Godhead that is reached carries with it all powers, Gurus have always warned their disciples against being led away by the meretricious charms of such Thaumaturgy—from pursuing their main objective, *viz*., Realisation of God or Self-Realisation. In some cases the master and pupil alike permit themselves to attend to the achievement of certain objects for which these powers are useful or necessary; and then they develop or exhibit these powers. In this book itself, frequent reference has been made to Sri Sai's powers which were inherent in him and which he exercised without any effort. One would naturally expect, therefore, the development or manifestation of similar powers in those trained under him.

Maharaj was undergoing a severe training in *Samadishatka* and was concentrating his mind undisturbed in Khandoba temple. Within a year or two of his entry, he began to develop clairvoyance, clairaudience and prophecy. As instances of such powers, a few may be given.

After the "gold plate grant," Maharaj seldom went to the mosque. Dr. Chidambaram Pillai and others who attended Sri Sai at the mosque would next visit Maharaj at the Khandoba temple. On several of such occasions, he would refer to what took place at the mosque—even though none communicated the same to him and even though the mosque was too far from hi- temple to permit his seeing or hearing anys thing done or spoken there.

Often when several people went to him he would drop hints applicable to and understood by the one concerned, who would thereby get convinced of Maharaj's mystic powers of thought-reading, etc.

Unfortunately the details of these are not preserved. Devotees are, as a rule, not the best person to note facts evidencing such powers. Their credulity, love of exaggeration, over-sensitiveness in trying to avoid anything like strict examination of seeming miracles and mysteries and usual want of the scientific attitude or training, account for the fact that here we have little to set out as strong evidence of the above-mentioned powers.

A few statements are, however, available which may serve as proofs.

One Narahari Londhe, a fairly respectable *grihasta* of Nevasa (some 40 miles off Sakuri) states that he had a single instance which revealed to him Maharaj's powers and also Sri Sai's. This Narahari with an old man and some others set out to Shirdi to see Sai Baba. On the way Narahari was feeling a revulsion at the very idea that he, a Brahmin, should go and bow to Sai Baba, a "Moslem."* When the party reached Shirdi, the old man and others went and bowed to Sri Sai, who asked them for

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*It was the irony of fate that the "Moslem" appearance Sai Baba had put on was so effective that, despite his assertions of Brahmin birth, his initiation and perfection under a Brahmin Guru and frequent exposition of Brahmanic scripture and dharma, and receipt of orthodox Hindu worship, he still passed for a Moslem. All could see Baba's bored ears.

dakshina and received their gifts and blessed them. But when Narahari thought of approaching Sri Sai, the latter (whose eyes always gleamed with preternatural power) looked fiercely at him in such a way that he dared not go nearer. Inferring that his lack of reverence was no secret to Sri Sai, Narahari mentally apologised for his fault. Yet each time he looked at Sri Sai, the latter was still fierce and the idea of approaching him had to be given up. Then Narahari went to Khandoba temple to see Maharaj and bow to him. As Narahari approached, Maharaj ,who sat with legs extended shifted his feet (on which Narahari wanted to place his head) by turning an angle of 100 or 150°. Narahari again approached these feet and Maharaj again veered and drew his feet away, saying "You are a Brahmin and cannot take darsan of Sri Sai. What business have you with me?" Narahari humbly apologised for his folly, but Maharaj still repeating "what business have you with me?", sent him away. Here was a clear proof of Maharaj's thought-reading power or clairvoyance.

Once a totally blind man went to Sai Baba for a cure, as the latter had effected remarkable cures of blindness, Sai Baba did not give him any encouragement or even a reply. So the man next proceeded to

Maharaj and prayed for sight. Maharaj looked at him, wept aloud and then said, "You are a prudent man, and when you have come to such a *Samartha* (*i.e.*, one possessed of vast powers and able to raise his devotee to the highest condition) like Sai Baba, why beg for restoration of the eyes of flesh—for the gross sight, which will only lead you on further in sin? Powerful Sai can no doubt give you that sight. But, gaining it, what next? What are you going to do? *If you have not long to live*, what then is the good of physical sight to you? Do not therefore go and ask Sri Sai for that sight. Ask rather for spiritual vision (*Jnana Chakshu*) the eye of Wisdom. You are eligible for that". Moved by this loving exhortation, the man went to Sai again—this time for spiritual light only and abode at Shirdi, to be constantly at the Samartha's feet-. In a few weeks, his heart was touched, illumination began to dawn on him, and in a month he passed away, with words of light and joy on his lips. Sai Baba thus spoke his epitaph—"He is not dead. He is in bliss, immortal, but his wife alone is dead." Evidently the approaching death and his attaining illumination were foreseen by Maharaj at his first interview.

The Raja of Jawar State went with his family and retinue to Sai Baba at Shirdhi;

and he sent one of his attendants with *nuzzur*—silver plates of fruits, nuts and rupees covered by costly lace to Maharaj. Maharaj just looked at that man, began to weep aloud and abused him. Further, he seized the plates and presents and threw them into the ditch outside the temple. Again with much weeping, he told that astonished but respectful attendant— "Go now. You have got the grace of Sai Baba and he will keep you at his feet *eternally*, and you will be blessed." The attendant retired from the temple. None could make out what Maharaj's words or conduct imported. But in four days, that man was attacked by cholera and died within a few hours of the attack. As he died in the proximity of Sai Baba, Baba must have kept him eternally at his feet.

Apart from the difficulty of getting clear and reliable evidence of similar instances proving Maharaj's powers, it is hardly necessary to labour the point any further. The subsequent history of Maharaj abounds with such instances. Besides, it is not on the possession of such powers that Maharaj is entitled to respect. Persons with various powers like these exist who are neither fit to be worshipped—nor even to be approached by persons anxious about their own worldly or spiritual welfare. In fact, Maharaj's worship was started by orders of his Guru at a time when he had developed no such powers.

Maharaj points out in his lectures how when an idol is installed, there are no miracles to witness nor immediate benefits to be got therefrom. But as people with increased devotion concentrate on it and worship it, they realise various benefits and many miraculous experiences (*chamatkars*) are also had.

The classic illustration of Akbar being shown by his counsellor Birbal that a mere pig's skull concealed under silk and set up for worship yielded the same benefits as any other sacred image is quoted by Maharaj in his lectures and has been frequently acted upon by him in his dealings with his devotees. The question, if these miracles are due to anything in the stones or objects worshipped, in the worshippers or in the processes and mantras, etc., adopted need not be discussed here. The question is too complicated, does not lend itself to an easy solution, and cannot (and need not) be faced in this short introduction to this saint's life. Any reader who is earnest about the solution of this and other similar problems has a very reliable method of satisfying himself. The saint is still living* and accessible. The experience of some have been kindly furnished to this writer and are in the Appendix. The experiences of other devotees can be had by meeting them. The saint can himself be approached through his books or personally—of course, observing the conventions that regulate such approach in every community.

CHAPTER XIX.

PUTTING A SPOKE IN HIS WHEEL

It is hardly necessary to inform the reader that the above chapters and their headings are not intended to suggest that any one of the powers or states mentioned was perfected either on a particular date or at Shirdi. The living organism transforms itself so gently and a change from one stage to another is so gradual that it is hard to fix the exact point at which the change is complete. In the case of most saints, through the whole or the best part of a lifetime, their growth alike in virtue and power goes on, although some ardent devotees of such saints fix up (for themselves) some particular date as that on which perfection of divinity was attained. In the case now under consideration, Sai Baba "foreclosed the years," locked and sealed up the future into the present with his *imprimatur*, transferred his own devotees to the newly installed deity and ensured by his mighty will the continuation and vast growth of that worship. The future and present, which are so widely distinct and contrasted to ordinary minds, *are equally* visible and controllable in the view of great seers. Sri Sai after revealing the past* of Maharaj dimly revealed also the future.

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* Sri Upasani Maharaj took Samadhi on 24-12-1941.

Once Sri Sai said to Maharaj—

Sai:—"You have to plant many plants or trees.

Mah:—"Yes. There is vacant ground next to the Khandoba temple. Shall I plant Tulsi (sacred basil) there?

Sri Sai:—What? You to plant Tulasi plants! They will not endure for ever. You must plant trees that will live for many centuries—from which people will derive benefit. You have to plant fourteen Pippal (अश्वत्थ or sacred fig) trees. So plant Pippal trees.

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* For the details of these as disclosed by Maharaj, see his lectures, and Lilamrita.

Mah:—(taking the Guru's words literally and finding no space for fourteen such trees near his temple) I do not understand what you say.

Sai:—You will, by and by, and that without any words of explanation.

Sai then gave the puzzled pupil his own clay pipe (*chilm*) to smoke and made him to smoke, despite his disinclination to smoke and said:

"Whenever I come to you, do give me tobacco and chilm. You must burn tobacco. The more you burn it, the more of people's sins will be burnt off. Go and sit in the temple. You are God's slave."

Maharaj was more mystified than ever—especially by the metaphorical or allegorical meaning of planting Pippal and burning tobacco. This was the first quarter of 1912, long before his installation at Gurupurnima of the next year. Jesus explained his parables to his disciples at least. But Sri Sai left his cryptic to his utterance unexplained even to the concerned disciple with the consequence that even now, the latter is left to guess his meaning and conclude that Pippal planting may probably refer to the planting of spiritual institutions. But burning tobacco to destroy people's sins still remains to him a mystery.

परोक्षप्रिय हि देवाः Truly, gods, *siddhas* and *sadhus* delight in paradoxes and dark sayings. Despite the mystic secrecy of Sai's sentences, one thing however was fairly clear, that somehow or in some way, Kashinath Maharaj was to have a gloriously active future, from which enduring benefit would be derived by thousands of persons for a long time.

The noviciate, though gilded by such splendid prospects in the very distant future, was a period of great trial and misery—physical and mental to Maharaj. Apart from his starvation, he had various painful experiences to endure. His body was tortured in various ways. He had to be on the hard and dirty floor surrounded by walls in which scorpions took up their permanent abode; and these occasionally favoured him with their sting. Again Khandoba temple was a lonely building in the fields, never lit at night; and snakes very often claimed the right of residence or of free passage there. Some of these were found on the blanket covering Maharaj once, and hanging above him dangling from the window, at another time; and once one of them took a fancy for his leg and coiled itself nicely round it. Each time, luckily he escaped getting snake venom into his system.

Apart from terrestrial nuisances, he had his other-worldly troubles also. The temple adjoined a cremation ground and corpses were burnt there by night or day- It also adjoined a well in which Moslems threw their "taboot" after Muharram; and popular belief (which Maharaj shared) people of both places with aerial denizens. Maharaj heard strange sounds, saw strange sights and felt other queer experiences. At times he went to the *lendi* path to meet Sri Sai after such suffering and Sri Sai always said: "Do not fear. I am with you always. The more you suffer now, the happier your future. The world in one scale and you in the other."

But the worst of Maharaj's sufferings have yet to be related.

People who noted how often Maharaj was worshipped and offered all sorts of gifts by the visitors to Sri Sai might carry away the impression that his life was a happy one. Of the rich Parsis who flocked to Sri Sai, several attached themselves to Maharaj. One of them sent up a deer skin to sit on and honey to drink. Maharaj gave them away to others. Some brought tea; Maharaj dashed it down, abused them and drove them away. Only persons like the Narsobadi palmist and Doctor Pillai who knew how to adapt themselves to his humour could get on with him. To these Maharaj revealed his inner unrest. "Well, Doctor" said he, "for a good while, my sufferings and their cause have been indescribable. I am like a dumb gagged brute, beaten and tortured, quite unable to express the pain felt." To the palmist who came to examine his palm and body (in November 1912) Maharaj said "Up to this time I have suffered sorrow and grief. The same seems to be my future lot also. I have lost house and doors. I have no wife, no domestic ties. I have not a pie, my body is shattered. Suffering all sorrows, you see to what I am reduced. I have not even a piece of neat cloth to put on. I have suffered much in the past. Is there happiness in store for me in the future or is it also to be all sorrow?"

If this was his condition in 1912, it certainly did not improve in 1913 and 1914. The villagers regarded him as mad and did not sympathise with him. A few, stirred up by envy and jealousy, readily believed and busily circulated aspersions against his character and could never forgive him the attention and esteem he still had from Sri Sai Baba. Besides the above, some other sources of annoyance rose into prominence in the third of his stay. The boys of the village, mostly Moslem, considered him to be mad and flung stones and filth at him. Elderly and pious Moslems revere madmen or let them alone. But frolicsome Moslem youths came in occasionally to torture him for their irreverent and unfeeling sport, in which they were encouraged by Maharaj's policy of non-resistance to evil. He would only tell them stories in return for their treatment. The extent to which these boys could go is seen in the following instance.

Once a band of graceless boys of ages varying from 10 to 20 brought a potsherd full of human and animal excreta and came near Maharaj. The latter kept silent, noting what they were up to. One of these rogues said to him—"you woman, why are you mute today?" and pointing to the potsherd added "Hallo. Baba! Here are sweets for you." Another merrily remarked "Put some of it into his mouth and he will speak." Not minding his silent tears, the boys thrust one piece of canine dung at first and then another into his mouth which he neither spat out nor swallowed. For a good while, as he went on shedding tears, with the dung still in his mouth, the boys gambolled round him, cracked jokes at his expense, played indecent and horrible tricks on his person, derided him, and after about half an hour of such "fun," cried out "hurrah," "hurrah" and left him. Maharaj after they left him, simply dropped the dung but did not complain or take steps to punish these wretches. "Endurance! Never return evil for evil!" were the guiding principles of his conduct.

But the boys came on again and again Then Maharaj stunned even Shirdi imagination by his method of self-torture* to avoid these human harpies. He dug a pit exactly like a grave (in the locality which was really a graveyard) lay down in it, pulled over himself some bundles of thorns and covered himself fully with several layers of thorns. The boys could not reach him through these and went away. Some visitors of Sri Sai next came and were dumbfounded at the sight of maharaj lying in this pit and under a pall of thorns. They called out to him but he did not respond. Fearing his wrath, they did not disturb him the first day. Next day unable to suffer even the pain of sympathy, some good people removed the thorns and Maharaj walked out of his grave.

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* Self-torture for such purposes was a common device with Maharaj. Once Daulu Sait of Rahata was pestering him with reverent attention. Maharaj took his (Daulu's) shoe and beat himself with it 100 times. Daulu went away and worshipped the shoe.

Even people with the best of intentions sometimes came to him and irritated him. Bapu Saheb Jog, a retired Engineer, was much pained in November 1913, at the prolonged starvation of Maharaj, took food to him (with the assent of Sri Sai), and knocked at the door of the Khandoba temple.

M.:—Who is there?

B.J.:—It is I. —Sakharam. I have brought food under instructions from Baba.

M.:—(from within, furiously):—Get away.

Bhimabai:—Open the door. Bapu S. Jog has brought food; get up and eat.

Then she pushed open the door. Maharaj was furiousa and beat her for her intercession. Bapu Saheb beat a hasty retreat to a safe distance and again spoke.

B. J.:—We have brought Naivedya under Sai Baba's order. You must eat it.

M.—Give it to crows and dogs as others do and go away.

B. J.: –It is for *you* we have brought—not for crows.

M.:From crows and dogs, I am not distinct; feeding them is feeding me.

B.J.—This high philosophy, I cannot comprehend. If you will eat it, I will leave it. Else I will take it away.

M.:—(angrily)—Get away, if you do not wish to feed crows and dogs.

B.J.:—It is to *you* we have been directed to take this *naivedya.*

Maharaj was in an angry mood, one of his tantrums; and he flung a brickbat at Bapu Saheb which hurt him in his arm, and made it bleed.

Bapu Saheb asked the villagers present to seize and tie up Maharaj and carry him to Sri Sai at the mosque. Maharaj was tied with ropes, After some detention at Bapu Saheb's house, Maharaj was carried to Sai; everything was reported to Sri Sai who merely ordered Maharaj to be unloosed, saying "He is a man of God. Let none trouble him" and told Maharaj "You should sit quiet. Go to your temple."

Perhaps the most painful and trying of tortures endured by Maharaj was at the hands of Nanavali, a stout and strong Brahman ascetic who had recently arrived at Shirdi. He declared that his mission at Shirdi was to protect his "uncle Sai" from all persons giving him trouble or bringing discredit upon his name, and he included in this category both Rao Bahadur H. V. Sathe and Upasani Maharaj. He behaved like a mad man and amongst other pranks, he took a special delight in pestering Maharaj. He would knock at and get into his temple at any hour, and disturb him even in his sleep. Thoroughly rude and irreverent, he would disturb others who waited on Maharaj for worship. Bringing dirt and mud he would fling these on Maharaj's body or on the floor. Once he pulled off his (Maharaj's) cloth, the only thing he wore, made him stand naked in the presence of many—even in the presence of Sri Sai and gambolled round him. He forced Maharaj at times to stand up and sit down alternately many times till the knees creaked with pain. Once he tied him up with a rope. Often he would talk of him with utter disrespect and contempt. Maharaj endured all this patiently and in silence.

Maharaj's sorrows were made worse by the absence of local sympathy. When he was tied up by Nanavali or by Bapu Saheb's men, not one would raise his little finger to help him or utter a word on his behalf. Barring Sri Sai and a handful of the local devotees, the rest were either jealous of him or callously indifferent to his fate. At times, he could not make out what Sai meant to do with him, keeping him in such a hell on earth. Once (July 1913) he unburdened his heart to the well-known novelist, H. N, Apte, when he came there and also mentioned that he was afraid that there was little chance of his surviving long and that he would like to have a last look at his relations. The novelist wrote to his brother Balakrishna Sastri at Poona who thereupon paid him a visit and consoled him. Maharaja's mother came later. She knew none at Shirdi and none knew her there. She went unannounced to Sri Sai Baba, who at once made her sit near him, applied Udhi (ashes) to her forehead with his own hand, darkly intimated to the persons present that she was a lady with great (*Punya*) merit; and sent her on to Khandoba temple without asking for or obtaining a single piece of information.

On the way, the villagers warned her from approaching that temple—as "a mad man lived there, who was likely to beat and molest her, if she approached." With maternal vanity, somewhat hurt by such appraisation of her son's worth, she went to the door and knocked. "It is I," replied the mother. In a moment, Maharaj threw open the door and clutched his dear old mother to his breast and shed tears of joy. The mother went back and Maharaja's sorrows again resumed their sway, like a sheet of moss just pushed out by the hand, covering the water again—almost immediately.

CHAPTER XX.

AJNATAVAS

By July 1914, *i. e.*, about three years after Maharaj began his noviciate, the cup of his misery was full to the brim and he was thoroughly disgusted with Shirdi and longed to get away. Just at this time "Dr. Pillai's" friend, Mr. Ganapatrao came and invited him to go to Sindhi (near Nagpur) and live with him. Maharaj agreed, stipulating however that none at Shirdi should know of his whereabouts, till the four years prescribed by the Guru should have run out. Accordingly at midnight on 25th July, 1914, he left Shirdi—taking only a mental leave of his omniscient guru, who must have of course known all his disgust and his secret plans of escape from Shirdi. After remaining a few weeks at Sindhi, he went to Nagpur and resided with "Dr. Pillai" for about a month and thence removed to Kharagpur.

There is very little to narrate in the history of Maharaj at Sindhi and Nagpur. At Sindhi, however, there was a change in his diet. Maharaj was made at Shirdi to break his long fast, by order of Sai Baba at Sankaranti in Jan. 1914—from which date he was taking some coffee at night for his nutrition. At Sindhi on 24-8-1914 *Ganesha Chathurti*, sacred to God Ganapati, the ladies of Mr. Ganpatrao's family compelled him to start eating solid food by their *Satyagraha*, i. e., by refusing to take any food unless he took it first.

A sudden resumption of solid food brought on colic and piles, which necessitated an operation. So the Parsi civil surgeon of Wardha was brought and he said that administering chloroform was necessary for the success of the operation. But Maharaj first assured him and finally showed him that his own iron will would answer the purpose equally well. The civil surgeon drew out the pile, cut it off, cauterised it with red-hot iron and stitched up the affected part, the whole operation taking up at least 20 to 30 minutes. All the time, Maharaj who was undergoing the operation without any chloroform or other anæsthetics, did not wince or shake even a little, but gently encouraged the doctor saying, "Go on without fear. God will give you success." When the operation was over, the civil surgeon prostrated himself before Maharaj and praised his unprecedented and wonderful Yogic control over nerves and the body.

After his return from Sindhi, Maharaj stayed only a very fewweeks at Nagpur.

While he resided at Dr. Pillei's, he went out to beg bread from Brahmin houses. His identity was kept secret, and his figure also had so thoroughly changed during the four years of his absence from Nagpur that none there recognised in him the old Pandit. This non-recognition that he rejoiced in took a comic turn one day. It was 8 or 9 P. M. when he went in his rags, with a potsherd to a Brahmin's house to beg for bread. The rags, the potsherd, and the untimely hour for a Brahmin to beg, made the man in the house suspect Maharaj to be a thief. Maharaj had asked for bread; and what did he get instead? A stone? No, something more painful. The house owner fisted him and boxed him soundly and sent him away without bread. Maharaj daily gave Dr. Pillai and his family some *prasad i. e.*, part of his begged food, sanctified by his touch. This day, after they had tasted the usual *prasad*, he told them that they had tasted an uncommon *prasad* that day—for it was "*prasad* of fists." They tried to guess his meaning but failed. When he told them of the actual facts, they were angry and wanted him to disclose the name of the man who had so churlishly fisted him. Maharaj declined to reveal the name as his object in mentioning the incident was not to get avenged, but merely to enjoy a bit of humour.

Maharaj started from Nagpur at 5. p.m. on 2nd october 1914 in a through train to Kharagpur, which he reached at about 9 or 10 A. M on the 4th. He spent about 40 hours in the journey and during all the time he did not get up even once from his seat, ate and drank nothing, spoke not a word, passed no motions nor even urine, and thus demonstrated once again what powerful control he had over his muscles and nerves. Dr. Pillai's brother, Chinnaswami Pillai, took him to his house at Kharagpur and kept him as his guest, *incognito*,—as he was merely represented to every curious inquirer, as a patient (of Dr. Pillai) who was out of his mind and who had been brought there for a change.

Maharaj and his host succeeded in keeping the Kharagpur public in the dark about the Shirdi epoch and antecedents of Maharaj for nearly two months.

Meanwhile human nature was going on asserting itself, Maharaj always sympathetic, especially to younger people, got interested in a Maratha (ten years old) girl, named Mira, and used to tell her moral tales (—as he used to tell such tales to his visitors even at Shirdi). Some people began to observe this and secretly came to listen, In the Christmas of 1914, when Chinnasami

Pillai had gone away to Shirdi, others also came to listen to these moral tales. One day Maharaj (who did good by stealth and blushed to find it fame) protested against their crowding to hear him, as he was only a crazy individual amusing himself by telling stories to a girl. But unmindful of this camouflage, the crowds increased. The women came to him with offerings during day time declaring that he was an *avatar*, and the men to hear moral tales at night. The more he protested that he was only a crazy patient and no mahatma or saint, the more confirmed were people in their own view that he was a saint of extraordinary merit —who must necessarily wield extraordinary power to bless or curse. Chinnaswami Pillai, on his return from Shirdi, found that during the short Christmas vacation, all *in-cognito* had gone, that merits of Maharaj had become widely known, and that there was far more of worship performed to Maharaj there than he ever enjoyed at Shirdi.

Both Maharaj and Sai at first resisted the earliest attempts to deify them in their life-time. Both finally submitted to and approved the worship. Maharaj tried at Kharagpur to avoid and prevent his worship —in vain. The more he avoided it, the more zealous became his admirers and devotees.

Maharaj, in his attempts to avoid worship, put so many obstacles in the way of the worshippers, and tried their temper and the extent of their faith in so many ways that a full account of his dealings (found in Lilamrita) would form very interesting reading to one who wishes to make a scientific study of faith and its problems. In this brochure, we may content ourselves with briefly noting a few of these interesting experiments and their results.

CHAPTER XXI

FAME AT KHARAGPUR

Maharaj during the three months of his stay in Chinnaswami Pillai's house kept himself and his room in a dirty condition. Seldom bathing, he would daily squat most of his time on the dirty ground under a jack tree in the open space opposite to the house. The women soon took up the idea that they must have the merit of giving him a weekly bath. So they would rub him all over with oil and next with soapnut, then pour warm water over him and finally rub him dry with towels. Then they offered him the usual articles of worship including food. He tried to disgust them by rejecting their gifts and getting dirty soon after their bathing ceremony was over. Sometimes he would go to latrines to clean them. Once he carried dirty bucket-loads from the latrines to some distance. Some times he sat in the latrines. Yet in any condition, in any posture, and under any circumstances, the women came clustering round him and worshipped him. Once he directed them to worship the latrine itself,—as his body which they worshpped also contained a latrine; and with blind faith, the ladies did so at once. He used certain bricks as commodes and ordered their worship and the docile devotees worshipped the dirty bricks. He left Chinnaswami's respectable quarters and shifted to a cooly's hut (Bhaggu's hut) and next to sweeper's and scavenger's huts. Yet, wherever he went, Brahmin and other caste people (especially women) came flocking to him and worshipped him, even ate things offered by him there; and conducted their mass feeding there (partaking, of course, of the meals). He made Brahmin ladies bathe, feed and clothe working-class and Harijan girls and old Sudra women for obtaining the great religious merit of such proceedings (*Kumari* Pooja, etc.). All his words were gospel (Vedas) to his devotees.

Maharaj had novel ways of dealing with important questions.Regarding the depressed or untouchable classes, the Harijans as they are now called, his othodox views compelled him to rank them as the lowest of castes, whose articles and proximity carried pollution. But in the presence of a *Sat-Purusha*, the baseness is lost; and just during that interval, they are elevated to a footing of equality with others. Besides that, there is always the doctrine that every class, the lowest up to the highest, obtains God-Realisation, by persevering in their caste duties (*Swadharma*) and acting virtuously. By so acting, it is said, they will be reborn in higher castes, and finally attain the supreme. This is the ordinary and orthodox rule. The exception is that by a *Sat-Purusha's* grace, Harijans can attain the highest even in this life. Maharaj's influence at Kharagpur tended to raise their level of comfort; and they were treated with more consideration than usual, by the devotees of Maharaj. As for modern claims of equality and temple-entry, they were not countenanced by him. On the other hand, he expressly forbade his caste devotees from mixing with the untouchables, except in his presence and to the extent permitted by him. Narrow as these limits may seem, in point of fact the scavengers and sweepers of Kharagpur felt socially elevated and improved by his stay in their midst—and several, no doubt, got further, an accession of faith and corresponding spiritual benefit.

One feature of his Kharagpur life, that has marked his earlier and later years also is his suddenly getting out of temper,—his tantrums. This did not seriously interfere with the worship offered to him. His worshippers viewed it as a good set-off to his amiable qualities.

मलिनमपि हिमांशोः लक्ष्म लक्ष्मीं तनोति, said they.

(*i. e.*, The dark patch on the moon adds to its loveliness).

People readily believed that blows and abuse from him were blesfings*. Such ideas are long current in this country and many instances are quoted in support of them. A saint received the worship of several visitors while he was seated on a barren rock and

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* *t.e.* even if they were not well deserved punishments for misdeeds. *Cf.* Sri Bhagavata VIII x x where Prahlad says to Vishnu regarding the punishment of his graudson Bali.

१. पुंसां श्लाघ्यतमं मन्ये दण्डमर्हत्तमार्पिनं ।
यं न माना पिता भ्राता मुहृदश्चादिशंतिहि॥
२. त्वयैवदत्तं पदमैद्र मूर्जितं हृतं त देवाद्य तथैव शोभनं॥
मन्ये महानस्स कृतोह्यनुग्रहो ।
विभ्रंशितो याच्छ्रय आत्ममोहनात ॥

(apologising for the absence of anything better to give them) flung at them stones as his *prasad*. The irreverent visitors threw them away, but the devout visitors took them home and found that they had turned into gold nuggets. Similarly persons beaten by saints were reported to have been cured of diseases. Abuse and beating from saints are considered potent instruments for the removal of one's sins and even for obtaining the good things of this world. Several instances of this sort are found in the history of Maharaj and one of the explanations suggested for this strange result of blows and abuse is that the saint repents and by way of reparation deliberately removes sin and confers health and worldly prosperity on the victims of his temper. Bapu Saheb Jog, whom he hit (and who later officiated as his priest at Sakuri) has been given a splendid tomb, with a nice temple built over it. Maharaj has by a process of apotheosis elevated him to the status of a god; and (pooja) worship is performed there periodically. Others beaten or injured by him have been provided by him with a pension, with health, etc.

A few facts and events during his stay at Kharagpur may next be set down, evidencing not merely the above feature but also the line of his spiritual progress.

Maharaj (as stated already) wished to pass his fourth year of probation peacefully amidst strangers, without being either worshipped or hated and persecuted. But he escaped neither as he could not escape his nature or destiny. By barely looking at him and observing his conduct or listening to his tales, people concluded he was a *Sat-Purusha* worthy of worship and said so to him. He protested and abused, but in vain: and the ladies assured him that the Sun could not be hidden inside one's palm. Finding further concealment of his nature and faculties impossible, he played the role of the Sadguru at Kharagpur, even before his probation was over.

Maharaj was both by expamiple and precept insisting on the virtue of humliity Humble yourself and he that humbleth the proud and exalteth the humble, will raise you, was his constant advice. One instance of his putting down pride of learning may be given here.

Once Damodar Pant and other officials went to Maharaj.

M.:—Why have you come here?

They:—To get Upadesa.

M.:—I am not competent to give any. I am only an invalid.

D.P.:—Pray teach me Bhagaved Gita.

M.:—I just told you. I have no such ability.

D.P.:—We cannot believe you.

Then Maharaj declared that he had learnt Gita from a *Mahar* (*i.e.*, scavenger caste) girl, who first asked him to wet the Gita in gutter water, and to bathe in that water, and that he faithfully obeyed her mandates.

D.P. :—You cannot escape this way: Teach us the Gita.

M. : –Then I will give you an alternative consider who taught Gita and to whom.

D.P.:–Krishna taught it to Arjuna..

M.:—Then Krishna alone can understand and explain what he taught.

D.P.:—You are Krishna.

M.:—(evidently considering D P. was not sufficiently sincere and earnest in his faith in his guru).I do not feel like Krishna. If you become Arjuna, then that will make me Krishna.

D.P.:—How am I to become Arjuna?

M.:—'Arjuna' means, useless stubble or rubbish; you must become low, and humble yourself to the dust. Then you will get the teacher Krishna. *Ahankara* Egotism) and *Abhimana* (Pride) have to be shed. If you cannot become Arjuna, try to be at least what your name imports (—the name Damodar denotes Vishnu or Krishna.)

Other virtues that Maharaj constantly impressed on his worshippers and admirers are contentment, resignation, and endurance, which were well brought out in the case of one Yamunabai. That lady and her husband Vinayakarao were sincerely devoted to Maharaj and they brought their offerings regularly to him. The very first time Yamunabai came up with her cup of milk as an offering, Maharaj looked at her, wept, and told her "We must be content with the lot or fate assigned to us by God." He repeated this weeping and exhortation to her specially day after day. None could understand the reasons for his conduct. In a month, however, the husband was suddenly struck with disease, and died within a few days of the attack. On the day of that death, Maharaj was in the sweeper Bhaggu's hut and crying woefully, complaining of severe pain in his own waist. All that time evidently the husband was in the throes of death. Yamunabai in her fresh bereavement ran to him for relief and would not let go his feet. Maharaj told her then, that he had already prepared her for this fate, and that she should accept the lot assigned to her by God. Still, she would not relinquish her hold of him. Some other lady devotees had to pull her off and take her home. Maharaj subsequently comforted her and strengthened her mind by his *Upadesa*. This was another clear instance of Maharaj reading the approach of death when ordinary people could by no means read it and taking the necessary steps in advance. Incidentally this case illustrates how great a faith, the devotees (especially the ladies) of Kharagpur placed in their Guru-God.

Having undertaken the responsibilities of a Guru, even in his probation, Maharaj (following the footsteps of Sri Sai in this respect) gave salvation to his devotees in accordance with the declaration in Bhag. Gita, Ch. VIII, 5.

अंत्यकाले च मामेव स्मरन् मुक्त्वकलेवरम्
यः प्रायात समद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः
x x x x
मय्यर्पित मनो बुद्धिः मामेवैष्यस्य संशयः

Says Sri Krishna to Arjuna :—If one thinks upon me alone at the time of leaving the body, he surely will come to me. Therefore at all times, think of me, and carry on your war. Your mind and intellect being surrendered to me, you will surely come to me (after death).

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* At the time of Yamunabai's first approaching Maharaj her husband had no illness.

Sri Sai demonstrated this several times at Shirdi, by giving one final *dhyasa* on him, *e. g.*, in the case of Nana Saheb Nimonkar, who died seeing Sri Sai in front of him and in all persons that approached him, for three days before his death. Let us see how Maharaj dealt with such cases.

One Sridhar Pant Singvekar was a faithful devotee of Maharaj. When he fell ill, he could not walk up to Maharaj's quarters and wanted his relations to invite Maharaj to go to him or carry him to Maharaj. The latter sent word day after day that he was coming. One day, he sent word that he was there in the sick room at the foot of the patient, Sridhar Pant was getting very impatient and eager for the sight of his Guru-God and finally he began to see Maharaj in the sick room (though no others could see him there) and died intently thinking of Maharaj and Maharaj alone—*i. e.*, having the अनन्यचिंता required by the Lord. Maharaj thus gave him his goal. Such a death is the great aim of devotees. "Truly." said the devotees, "this Maharaj is a chip of the old block" (Sai).

Having taken the role of the teacher, Maharaj not only edified his devotees by moral tales, and by impressing on them the meaning of the fasts, feasts and observances they should as Hindoos take to, but also heightened the effect of all these by occasional *Chamatkaras* or miracles. He generally denies that he has any power to perform miracles, but on occasions they come out of him and are even owned up.

The world is a world of opposites. Wherever devotees are attracted to and praise a saint, as a rule, some enemies and detractors are sure to be found. Even in cases of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Ramdas, etc., this is found to have been the case. Sri Sai also had his detractors and opponents, No wonder then that his disciple, Maharaj, never escaped opposition, jealousy and calumny wherever he was. His opponents at Shirdi have been mentioned already. At Kharagpur next, a set of officials were angry that so many women including those of their own household should worship and bathe this naked saint and they tried to molest and hinder his work as far as they could.

At 8 or 9 P. M. on *Ashada Vadhya*, 1915, Maharaj sat at his veranda surrounded by ladies; Bhangis *i. e.*, scavengers were sitting at a distance. He was giving his moral and spiritual discourse to all. Just then, four or five of his opponents (Brahmins) approached, each holding a lantern in his hand, pretending to go there for *darsan*. Lakshmibai Khasnis who was there knew them and told Maharaj that they were men of the hostile party (Anti-Maharaj). Maharaj saw them when they were at a good distance, and said to the women, "None of you should talk. Be silent, all of you. Do not laugh. Do not shake even your bangles. Let them come if they choose. I shall have some fun." They all kept silent and quiet, as also Maharaj. By this time the visitors arrived. The Bhangis sat outside the veranda; and they did not know that the visitors were hostile; they thought them to be persons who came sincerely for *darsan*. One of the visitors asked the Bhangis—"Where is Maharaj?" Bhangi:—"He is in the veranda. Go and take *darsan*." Hearing this, the visitors went up to the veranda and examined it with their lanterns and saw none there. They got down from the veranda and asked Bhangis again "He is not there. How then did you all say that he is there?"

Bhangi:—"He is sitting in the veranda. We were seeing him. Just now, he was talking with us. How do you then say that he is not there? Go in and see." Again they entered and came to the veranda with their lanterns and looked all over the veranda. They did not see any one. They talked to themselves. The Bhangis are liars. They are joking with us." Then they came out and told the Bhangis, "You fellows, why are you jesting with us? Where is Maharaj? You must tell the truth." One bold Bhangi said, "Babu Saheb, we are Bhangis. You are babus and dare we joke with you?"

Visitors:—"If this is not a joke, what is it? All of us went in and saw the veranda and we could not see him."

Bhangi:—"If you cannot see him What are we to do? There is something wrong with your heart and intention and so you cannot see him. You have not come with a view to get his *darsan*. You have no true faith in Maharaj. How do you fail to see Maharaj? This is a great surprise to us. We can clearly see him sitting; and before you came, he was talking with us as well. Go in and see,—but purify your heart."

A third time the visitors came to the veranda and with their lamps examined the veranda several times. Maharaj was not to be seen. They went away saying in English, "The Bhangis are liars." After they went away to a distance the ladies began to laugh and say, What a rare miracle!' All there had been rendered invisible.

Before *Sravan* of 1915 began, *i. e.*, before 10-8-1915, Maharaj had a considerable following intensely devoted to him, and a smaller set or coterie of bitter opponents. Maharaj's view on the subject is that the existence of both sets is essential to make a saint perfect. The *Sat-Purusha* gets perfect—it is said—by absorbing both in himself. To the Advaitin, this is patent or axiomatic, as both good and evil are but *gunas*, which constitute *Prakriti*; and *Prakriti* is swallowed up in the Atman, as perceived by the God-Realiser or Self-Realiser. Even with the dualist, this doctrine finds approval. The presence of evil in the Universe is explained by him in various ways. It is one of a set of relative existences; the existence of evil is essential to the existence of the good; but a wise and all-powerful Providence sees to it, in its wisdom and mercy, that the evil after helping on the good is finally absorbed in the good. Thus Hiranya Kasipu, Ravana, etc , were absorbed finally at the feet of God. A *Sat-Purusha* combines in himself, the Advaitic realisation of the Brahman, and the *Dwaitic* idea of a personal God, (Iswara) that controls and finally absorbs the evil He creates, into Himself. Maharaj, therefore, never complained of those hostile to him at Kharagpur, any more than he complained of the hostile men or boys, or the annoying scorpions and snakes of Shirdi. His method of dealing with all these was tha same. Endure them as far as you can. If the maximum limit of endurance has been reached, shift yourself from them.

The hostile party at Kharagpur by August had gone to extreme lengths. Being literate men, they tried to petition and influence the police against Maharaj. His going naked getting bathed by ladies and being the cause of the two factions or parties at Kharagpur appeared to these men a sufficient ground for the police to send him away, as one whose presence promotes breach of peace. Their petitions were sent on for enquiry. When an Assistant Supdt. (evidently an Anglo-Indian) came up for enquiry, Maharaj was quietly seated, and around him, cooking was going on, on a grand scale, to feed several thousands.

On account of and being encouraged by Maharaj several such (*Bhandaras, i. e.*) mass feedings had taken place; on this occasion also, large numbers of devotees were very peacefully engaged in cooking and other preparations for a vast charity feeding. When the officer came and saw the Maharaj and the peaceful activities of his devotees, he was convinced that the allegations of the petitioners were untrue—and he said so at once to some of the petitioners who accompanied him. So he started to go back home. Getting back a short distance, he missed his dog, and came back. He asked Maharaj, "Where is my dog;" Maharaj replied "It is gone to your house" and thereupon the officer went away. As a mattre of fact, however, when Maharaj spoke this, the dog was seated at the feet of Maharaj, and the officer was strangely unable to see it. When the officer left, Maharaj patted the dog and said ,'Go, Your master is gone away. Go to your house before he goes," and off it fled.

A few days after this was *Sravan* of 1915. That was the time, when his Kharagpur devotees were trying to make arrangements to make him stay there permanently. They informed him about it. But he kept his own counsel, and said nothing. The four years of probation were just then coming to a close. There was no need for him to further face hostile parties at Kharagpur. Soon after he left Shirdi, Dr. Pillai (on his behalf) had written to his elder brother about the *Ajnatavas*—without however revealing his exact whereabouts—and the propsal by Maharaj after the lapse of one year, to reture from *Ájnatavas* to pay him and the old home a visit. So Maharaj could start back and go to Satana and Poona. One night Maharaj was missing foom Kharagpur, and the next day or the day there-after was found to be at Nagpur at Dr. Pillai's house. This excited much surprise. His sudden departure overwhelmed his devotees with grief and many of them came to see him at Nagpur and other places.

Maharaj's stay at Nagpgr and the neighbourhood was about two months. Considerable enthusiasm was rovsed among his devotees by his reappearance there; mass feedings and *bhajana* went on; and miracles were reported. We shall just note one and pass on. As he was residing at the house of his devoted pupil Mira, many came to see him— among them a young lady, Dhondibai, with her mother-in-law. After a short stay, the mother-in-law went away leaving the young lady to do service to Maharaj and added fairly loudly "Dhondi" do not return home till Maharaj beats you, and told Maharaj also to beat her well and give her thus a high position of favour amongst his devotees. Maharaj laughed and protested that he could not beat any one without due provacation. Anyhow, the girl stayed on for some days rendering personal service to Maharaj—who did not beat her at all. Meanwhile, Dhondibai's father-in-law wished to go over and take *darsan* of Maharaj but was prevented by lumbago. One night he had bolted his room from within before retiring to sleep; but in the course of the night he was too stiff to get up and unbar the door to get any help. In this serious predicament, the figure of a saint entered (it was covered by a sack clolh) lit the lamp, lifted him up, massaged his waist and helped him over his trouble; and in a few days he improved so far as to walk up to Maharaj. When he worshipped the feet of Maharaj, he mentioned his experience of the saint in his room and declared his belief that his nocturnal visitor was Maharaj and that all help so far received was from him. The latter humbly repudiated the idea and said that he never moved out of his lodgings,—being an invalid himself, and that, pleased with Dhondi's meritorious service, God or some (*Ishta Devata*) divine agency must have intervened on his behalf and given him help.

CHAPTER XXII

RETURN TO OLD HAUNTS

At Nagpur, Sri Upasani Baba (as we may term him henceforward) rose into great fame. Hundreds of all sorts and conditions came to him, to take *darsan* or to do pooja; and he began to deliver lectures on spiritual matters. His. Kharagpur devotees flocked to his feet at Nagpur and spread his fame by narrating what he did at Kharagpur and before he went there. He visited Sindhi, *i. e.*, Dr. Ganapatrao's place and drew crowds even there. Many devotees going to him noted with wonder how he accurately informed them when they were about to start for the railway station about the delay in their train arrivals. They would go to the station (some half a mile off from his camp) and discover that in accordance with his statement their train had not arrived. From Sindhi, Baba went back to Nagpur and massfeedings, poojas, etc., took place on a grand scale, and he was finally given a very grand send-off, amidst phenomenal crowds.

Now that four years were over, he was free to go and visit his relations and his old haunts at Poona and Satana endeared to him all the more by his long absence. So, early in 1916, Maharaj set out on his tour with a number of his devotees. After going to his brother at Poona, he visited his own village, Satana, stayed there for a month and a half and then returned to Shirdi to stay by the side of his Guru. He took up his residence at the Khandoba temple as before. Old acquaintances, including a familiar brown bitch (which he had very kindly looked after) flocked to him. His opponents were also there. And Nanawali also—to favour him with his kind attentions, on account of which Baba had after a stay of some seven months—to quit Shirdi, a second time. Dhaulu Sait took him to his garden at Rahata, three miles off Shirdi. Here many devotees gathered round him and conducted prolonged *bhajan* (*Sapthas*, they are called) and mass feeding. Naturally miracles took place—of which we shall instance one noticed by Dhaulu Sait.

One day a woman presented a single orange fruit to Baba. There were some twenty devotees with him at the time. He peeled off the orange and took up the *acini*, its natural slices (*solai*). No orange contains more than ten or twelve of these. Baba gave one of the slices to each of his devotees. Dhaulu Sait was watching him at this distribution; wondering if some of those present would have to go without any *prasad*. But all the men present got each his slice; and five or six more men who came along while the distribution was proceeding also obtained each his "slice". Dhaulu Sait told Baba "Men will always be coming. How many will you supply out of one orange? Baba replied "I am going on giving, and this orange will suffice for all. If men stop coming, no more slices will be forthcoming. If they do not come now, they are not fortunate enough to get the slice *prasad*." Then after over 30 slices were given away, no more men came. There were no more slices either.*

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* Baba was asked—after the above was written—why subsequent comers could not be given slices. Then Baba explained the power of multipying the slices is a species of living entity, which, in its course of evolution, has to raise to higher forms of existence. In order so to raise, that power needed Baba's help and so wished to oblige him by placing its services at his disposal. When he first took up the orange to slice it and distribute it, the power offered its services; and Baba, acting on that offer, went on boldly giving a full slice to each one present. But that offer ended when the distribution was over. If he was to repeat that miracle later, he would have to take the inititative and beg that power for its favour. This he was not prepared to do. This power is known in Madras as *Akshaya Patra* (given to Dharamraja during the Vanavasa period by Surya) and in the Bible as Miracle of the loaves and fiishes.

Baba was taken by Dhaulu Sait next to his Ahmednagar mills and kept there for a while. Again he came for the third and last time to Shirdi to reside in the proximity of his Guru. After a stop of two or three months, he was obliged to go to Miraj. Later, at the invitation of some Sakuri farmers, he went and took up his final residence there in 1917. They put up a small hut for him in the place of his choice—*viz.*, a corner of the burial ground. For some years there, occasional visitors came to him attracted by the wonderful accounts of what they heard about him, besides the devotees from Shirdi. Kharagpur, etc. Among the many miracles reported at that time, the most momentous appears to be that of a high placed person in an Indian State who came to him after loosing his place. That gentleman said nothing; but stayed on for about two months; and at the end of that period was recalled to service by the Ruler of his State. In another state, permission to adopt a son could not be got at first, despite much effort—and was obtained after the parties came and served at Sakuri. There were also cases of cures of consumption, obsession by evil spirits, fever, poverty and other troubles. No exact or satisfactory accounts of these are available to this writer and so these need no further mention here, Maharaj's influence however steadily grew, especially after the publication in the local vernaculars, of his life in 1921–22, the Mahrathi life being from the pen of an able and well-known writer; and people from Bombay, Nasik and other distant places flocked to him in increasing numbers. Dr. Komberbail, L.M.S Bombay and a set of Saraswaths regularly visited him from 1923 and some of them kindly furnished this writer with a detailed account of their experiences,* In 1923-24 Baba began to deliver a series of inspiring religious lectures, and these were taken down and appeared in a Mahrathi monthly named *Sai Vaksudha*. These impressed many, for therein, he spoke "as one having authority", as a *Sat Purusha*, a God-man or Super-man. As these have more publicity to Baba, the stream of visitors was visibly swelling in its mass and importance. Gradually the visitors made their pious offerings and Baba put up a huge. Datta Temple, a small mosque for Mahomedan visitors, a decent one-storeyed residence for himself, and two or three dharmasalas for numerous guests to stay. On account of these buildings, the part of Sakuri where Baba lives, presents a more civilised appearance than the rest of the hamlet.

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* See Appendix.

CHAPTER XXIII

BABA'S MISSION AND TEACHINGS

The idea of a Saint, having a mission is largely a Western idea. Where *Shanti* (Peace), *Nirvana* (Annihilation), *Moksha* (escape from cycle of existence), etc., form the ideals governing the lives of people, few would think of a mission as befitting the dignity or nature of a perfect soul. Yet even a pure Advaitin may recognise a "mission" as part of a *Sadhana* adopted in the path to perfection or as mere sport taken by the perfect person, for the lingering remnant of his human ego,—if not for the *Iswaric* Ego which also, at times, he may be identifying himself with. Those whose religion is mainly devotion to a Personal God that is said to have certain high purposes, naturally conceive of individuals being employed by God to carry them out; and these then, have a "mission". In this sense even (Avatars) incarnations like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna have are born with a mission; the nature of which is expressed so forcibly by the latter in his Gita:

परित्राणाय साधुनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृतां ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

i. e., I take birth in Yuga after Yuga to protect the virtuous, to destroy the wicked and to establish the Moral law (Dharma).

In spite of this declaration, most Advaitins especially those following the Janana Marga conceive of themselves as Actionless Soul and aim at securing peace—leaving the task of assisting virtue and destroying vice to those who have a more social and active turn of mind.

As for Upasani Baba, he has at times said that he has been entrusted with a task by his guru, viz., to help thousands onwards in their spiritual course. For that very purpose sin had to be eradicated, the sex urge and love of money had to be controlled, and sufferings endured, as mentioned in the previous pages. Speaking broadly then, the mission of U. Baba was to carry on the work of his Guru Sri Sai Baba further. The nature of the work turned out by both pupil and Guru is one of the reasons why each of them has been described by devotees as Sri Rama or Sri Krishna or Sri Datta incarnated in these times to drive away evil and to prevent sin from corrupting and lowering the life of Hindus of the present day.

Modern readers are seldom contented to know that any person in a prominent position like Upasani Baba is advancing Dharma are the moral law; they wish to know what or the special items of work taken up, what (if any) are the peculiar views, the ideas and methods advocated or adopted and what special service has been actually rendered by him. It is not easy for one to take accurate views of near objects—near in point of time or space. Reverence and devotion, to some extent imply nearness of another sort and disqualify one from taking a real photograph of one's object of reverence; these will easily lead one to see one's Guru through rose tinted glasses fitted with opaque blinkers on several sides. Yet with the aid of devotees, an attempt is made here to set down a few at least of the special features of Baba's work as seen by a Madrasi trained on lines altogether different from that of Upasani Baba. Without more ado, a few incidents known to the writer be immediately related which will throw some light on these matters.

When that Madrasi trained to some extent in orthodox Advaitism of Sri Sankara (as it obtains generally in the Southern Presidency) went up in 1932 to Sri Upasani Baba, the latter asked the Madrasi as to his training and aim. The latter replied that the only aim known to him was to sit and realise Sri Sankara's aphorism* ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या.— examining object after object presented to the consciousness, condemning it as "Illusion," and thus trying to stand in the One Real. At once, Baba answered, "Hallo! That is the final stage. Does your mind stand at the Real when you thus try to rest it there?" The reply was "No. It does not. The Vasanas (subliminal urges or tendencies) are too strong to permit the peaceful resting on the Real; and it is to arrest the restlessness, Sakuri has been approached."**

Baba declared at once that it was folly for one to meddle with a post-graduate course when one ought to be at his elementary class lessons, and that Baba's aim was to put each person into the class for which he is fit and then to train him up gradually for a higher course.

Baba is therefore very strongly (in almost every case) against one's devoting exclusive or even much attention to the

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*This means "This world of phenomena is unreal. Brahma (God) alone is real".

**As to how Baba's Sakuri Asram helps one to control the Vasanas, see the end of ch. XXV, ultimate goal. That is no doubt given its place in the mental background. Works dealing with that are read and got by heart by his pupils according to his order,—e.g., Bhagavad Gita and Ashtavakra Gita, which are read daily at the Arati merit service. Baba describes to all the great merit and power they acquire by simply repeating the words without troubling themselves about the meaning. Mere repetition with the action (*SatKarma*) he prescribes for each devotee will go on accumulating a store of merit, the effect of which will come to the devotee one day suddenly; the whole underlying truth of all these works, in all its fulness, will flash before him in a moment—in absolutely clear and unmistakable light. Then there will be no need to discuss, comment or carry on any further *sadhana* Till that stage is reached, the reading and repetition of the works and all other mantras, slokas, etc., used at the Arati, etc., should be continued with blind faith in the Guru, who directs the study and whose duty is to bring about the aforesaid illumination and revelation.

Blind faith is one of the cardinal doctrines of Baba's institution. The general run here pin their blind faith to Baba. To these Baba is God; everything he does is right, and unquestionable; everything he prescribes is for the best. There is nothing unknown to him in the past, present, or future, and there is nothing beyond his power.

Regarding the actual course to be adopted, Baba recognises that the course for each has to be adapted to his or her special circumstances. Once he told this writer that he (Baba) is seated at his asram waiting to give the needed direction and guidance to every one—from a one-year-old child to to the man or woman with one foot in the grave. Kaaya Dhava says, that in the case of his one year old child, that had been taken to Baba and placed on his lap just for a minute, he showed his special grace. That child, six months later, died suddenly—remembering Baba, pointing to Baba's picture on the locket on its breast, and again to the vacant space in front, where probably Baba was present to its eyes,—just as Sri Krishna was present to bless the sight of Bhishma in his last moments—to ensure salvation.

Though the details of the course recommended to each may differ, there are certain main features present in all of them which may be mentioned here. Baba almost invariably directs his devotees to stick to Karmamarga and Bhaktimarga.

They should be deeply devoted to and put implicit faith first in their Guru—surrendering their will and their all to him, and next in their *Ishta-Devata*—i. e., the particular form in which God has appealed to them. They should not merely try to turn their mind and heart to these. As mind and heart seldom work except in material ways cognisable by the senses, they are directed to be almost always doing something in furtherance of their goal—to reach their Guru-God. This something, of course, must be good works, unselfish beneficial works. and works in consonance with the *Swadhama* of the doer. Baba is very conservative and does not want his devotees to criticise and relinquish any part of the faith of their fathers as superstitious. The word superstition does not find a place in his dictionary. If you do not find an old usage useful to you, —you may omit it, and adopt some other usage suited to you and in consonance with the duties of your station. But Iconoclasticism, Rationalism, Controversialism, Logic chopping, etc., are anathema to him. Almost invariably the devotees who flock to his feet put blind faith in him and his words, and experience almost immediate benefit. Either they have supersensuous experience or they have an increase in the strength of their moral fibre or they may have a higher peace beginning to pervade their heart, driving out their previous cares, doubts and sorrows;—and are thus encouraged to develop their blind faith further. According to them it is the so-called "blind faith" that sees higher things worth seeing; and it is blind only to (and shutting out) the world's harmful ultra-violet rays that blur or distract their version from performing its legitimate task. It is to this faith the great master of Palestine referred when he said "Ye must receive the Kingdom of God as a little child" and again—"If Ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, Ye would say unto this Sycamine tree—'Be thou rooted up and be thou planted in the sea,' and it would have obeyed you."

Faith—this faith that moves mountains is nine-tenths of Religion; and Baba's main effort is in that direction right up to the end of each devotee's course. Subject to this and a few other cardinal positions, Baba allows a great deal of latitude to his devotees. They choose their particular form of worship; the methods and *Sadhanas* they are accustomed to are not disturbed. Even to Parsis and Moslems, Baba has extended help in realising their religious goal. A Parsi who came to him felt shy in approaching him as he is a Hindoo; and Baba advised him to see if he could get a

Sat–Pursuha in his own community. If he could not, he might safely approach a *Sat-Pursuha* in any other community. *Sat-Pursuhas* are not for "conversions" in the lower and statistical sense. They help each devotee to advance on lines consistant with his own faith.* Another Parsi was helped by Baba to see his own Zaruthushtra, a few years back.**

Faith is the sheet anchor on which Baba wants all his devotees to rely. *Jnana* may be the ultimate goal—but that is sure to be attained by faith, and never without faith. *Sat-Karma* (including in it *Swadarma* is the second great weapon with which Baba arms all his devotees. One cannot stay near Baba for even an hour without noting that most of his talk and advice is about such good works. He devotes a large part of his lectures to the various ceremonies and good works that the Indian calender gives such vast scope for. An oft repeated saying of Baba is this—'If one simply goes on observing all the facts, feasts, ceremonies and observances shown in each year's calender, his or her observances shown in each year's calender, his or her salvation is assured." The mind of one who has read a calender might reel at the idea of undertaking the innumerable ceremonies mentioned there for each month. But each sect, section and community has been observing one set of them, and Baba by the example of his Sakuri Asram shows how a good number of them can be observed. In fact one who resides with him, or at his Asram for even a short period notes how effective these observances are when they are accompanied by full faith sincerity and earnestness. Baba with his vast experience of human nature is never likely to place too heavy a burden on the shoulders of the baby, or tyro in spirituality, the new comer—especially if imbued almost wholly with Western ideas and ideals.

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*Neither Rai nor Upasani Baba could be charged with proselytism. Their tolerance is illustrated and commemorated by edifices. Sai's mosque , and grand marble tomb in a huge stony pile was constructed by Hindus Upasani Baba has constructed a neat little mosque close to his Datta temple at Sakuri.

** See Appendix.

One who watches the daily activities of the resident devotees notes how they are busy. They have not merely the attendance at the *darsan* and *Aratis* of Baba and Datta, not merely the bhajans singly and in groups, at the Datta temple and at Baba's gate, to attend to, —but they have also their private and secret worship of the picture of Baba and the sacred images they maintain; and they may have their private *bhajan*. They also make daily *pradakshina*, i.e., pious circuit a fixed number of times round each of the shrines there *viz.*, Datta, Baba, Maruti (or Hanuman), Asvatha tree (Pippal), Oudhumbara tree, etc. They cook and present food to their Guru, beggar guests, birds and beasts and then eat the remaining food. The Brahmins are directed by Baba, not to fail in their *Nitya Karma* and *Naimithya Karma* in addition to their Japa at the holy of holies. In addition to these Baba rouses up the inner fervour of all by periodiical '*Sapthas* and *Yajnas*.'

Sapthas are repetitions of mantras at the Datta temple and before Baba's residence by males and females respectively, day and night continuously by batch after batch for many days before and some times after a particular sacred day, *e. g.*, Sankaranti, Rama Navami, Guru Poornima, Navaratri, etc.; the chosen mantra is repeated loudly to the accompaniment of an *Ektar* or harmonium; and the atmosphere of the temple and Baba's residence is full of the special idea of the deity concerned. For example, during the seven days prior to Ramanavami, one hears morning, noon and night,

रामाय रामभद्राय रामचंद्राय वेधेस रघुनाथाय नाथाय सीताया: पतये नमः and for five days after it,

मनोजवं मारुत तुल्यवेगं जितेंद्रियं बुद्धिमतां वरिष्ठं वातात्मजं वानरयूथ मुख्यं श्रीरामदूतं शिरसा नमामि ॥ which mean

1. I bow to Rama; the dear Rama, the Moon-like Rama, our Creator, the Lord of the Raghus; the Protector (of all) and the dear Lord of Sita.

2. I bow my head to Maruti (Hanuman), who is quick as thought, fierce as a tornado, who has thoroughly subjugated his senses, who is wisest among the wise, the son of Vayu (God of Air); chief among the host of monkeys and the messenger of Sri Rama.

The writer has watched the effect of these repetitions and constant listening to these words. The colony is small and one hears these sounds from any part of it, night and day. These electrify the very air of the Asram and produce a religious ozone which purifies the heart and dispels doubt, care, and the lower urges of our nature. At times, in specially sensitive souls, there is the sudden appearance of God, the *Ishtadevata*. With such an appearance, some reach the high water mark of their spirituality; and ever keeping up or trying to keep up the presence of God in their soul, their spiritual career is assured, and their life has served its purpose. Such an experience is called *Sakshatkar*. It distinctly seals the individual to God and thereafter, descent to sin and levity, or other form of degradation is practically out of the question. There are several among the bhaktas (as the writer finds from the statements of experiences) to whom this experience has come, and become (in some special cases) almost a matter of daily experience. In the case of many, however, the experiences stop short of *Sakshatkar*. Yet still they leave such a deep and good impression of the holy forms and thoughts that even perceptibly they are affected by these for a good many days after each *Saptha*. But (as Baba often remarks), it is a mistake to judge of pious practices by their immediate effect alone. These sink deep down nito the heart, into the subconscious. They constitute the *Poorva Punya* which may have an exuberant harvest later on—(perhaps in later births) in flashes of intuition. For instance, sitting to meditate on Rama, there may be two;—one may get immediately absorbed in the form of Rama and attain Samadhi; while the other is probably still fighting the enemies,—distracting thoughts and lower urges. The former has probably had previous repetitions of Rama Mantra either in this birth or former births—and the latter, not. How is it that some people see truths flash before them with vivid reality when hearing a *mantropadesa* while the minds of others remain thoroughly insensitive and dull as a stone? Previous japa or none may be the real and underlying explanation of the difference. It is not only for spiritual benefit that these mantra japas are serviceable. Even people anxious to secure worldly benefits, *e. g.*, wealth, domestic happiness, good progeny, etc.; may achieve them either now or in the distant future by such mantra japa. Baba generally winds up his advice by pointing out that though *Sakama Karma* i. e., action with motive is better than inaction, still unattached action (*Nishkama Karma*) is the best, the thing to be aimed at.

A few words about *Yagnya* i.e.. sacrifice may be set down next. The Vedas sing the praise of Yagnyas, and Baba naturally insists on the performance of Yagnya. It is the priestly class that directly perform it, but others who get them to perform it also derive their benefit. The priest is like the expert chauffeur employed by the owner of a car to drive it. Even as symbol, Baba prizes Yagnya. Its essence is sacrifice and without sacrifice no advance is possible. Lower interests and the lower self have constantly to be sacrificed, that

> "Men may rise on stepping stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

This aspect, however, Baba leaves for a later course. The chief lesson he teaches, and the chief example he sets are in the actual performance of the material Yagnya as prescribed in the books. There are many gods (*devas*) whose powers are vast; and there are mantras and observances which are (if properly performed, especially with full faith and under proper direction) effectual in inducing them to bless the devotee who gets the Yagnya performed, the actual performers and even the reverent spectators.

देवान् भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयंतुवः ।
परस्परं भावयंतः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥

which means 'Please gods by these (sacrificial offerings) and they will make you rejoice. Each pleasing the other, both of you (gods and men) obtain the highest merit.' (B. Gita, Ch. III. 11.)

Faith works miracles every day in Baba's Asram through the channel of these

Yagnyas and other ceremonies. Numbers come to him grieved at their misfortunes in matters of finance, domestic relations, health, infirmities, etc. Baba frequently prescribes the course for them to follow, *e. g.*. worship of Datta, Pradakshina of Sani and Oudhumbar, Seva of beggars and the devotees, or at the temple, Japa of certain mantras, oblations at the sacrificial fire to Agni, Ekadasi and certain weekly fasts, feeding the poor and Brahmins, etc. Many of these who adopt such courses often get over the troubles for which they came, and acquire or develop the habit of altruistic work, devotion to their Ishta Devata, increased steadiness at their Japa, increased calmness and concentration—with the attendant benefits. Those who came and started "good works" with an object, stay on and see the greater advantage of doing "good works" without any ulterior purpose and continue to live merely as the instruments of God, selflessly carrying on their Swadharma, as the will of God. Sometimes on special occasions, Baba ordered or approved of Yagnyas at the Asram on a grand scale. Then for the best part of a day all the devotees gathered together and carried on a huge sacrifice, *e. g.*, "*Satha Chandi*," *Vishnu Yaga*, etc., [throwing into the fire grains, fruits, and large quantities of ghee, *i. e.*, clarified butter], in the Datta temple or elsewhere; and every one felt that it is such sacrifices that must have formed the chief feature of the Rishis' Asramas in the forests thousands of years ago and that Baba's mission is really to revive and reinvigorate the pure Hinduism of ancient days. At present, Baba is training the Kanyas he has married and some other ladies to carry on these homas.

CHAPTER XXIV

CUI BONO?

After reading the preceding chapters, some readers may yet exclaim *Cui Bono?* What good will Baba and his work do to us individually or to the community in its present condition? Though it is not possible to satisfy every reader by one's replies, a few facts will be noted here. Some may find their benefit or means of obtaining such benefit by a carefull study of those facts.

Baba is approached by thousands every year. What is it that makes them go to him? Says Sri Krishna, चतुर्विधा भंजते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोर्जुन । अर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थी ज्ञानी च भरतवर्षभ । i. e., "Four sorts of people come to me (1) Those in trouble and sorrow, (2) those curious to know and anxious to experience God, (3) those who want wealth (possessions and other good things here and hereafter), and lastly, (4) the man of illumined mind (who wants nothing but Me). Of these, it is the third class that forms the majority of the votaries of Sri Krishna or Baba and next numerous is the first class. Baba does not want people to make of him a catspaw to obtain their nuts form the fire of misfortune or disease. But he does not reject all of them on that ground. Some of these, he sees to be fit recipients of his help. They are mostly helped (at least in part) to tide over their troubles, and then, by reason of their contact with Baba and his Asram, a change (generally gradual) comes over their nature. A man for instance, who came to save his daughter's life or escape bankruptcy, serves Baba awhile, saves that life or obtains some wealth, and starting with gratitude gets strongly attached to his Guru; he then places implicit faith in his words ever afterwards. Baba uses that faith to give the devotee a great spiritual impetus that ensures the attainment of his spiritual goal. Even if the man fails to get the temporal benefits for which he approached Baba. either further hope or the effect of the magnetic qualities of the Guru, (which work at times merely through the pure spiritual atmosphere of his Asram) makes the man change his viewpoint, give up lower aims and start a noble spiritual course. Devotees are mostly attracted to a saint at first by earthly hopes, especially if he is popularly termed a Sat–Purusha as that (according to current usage) implies super-human power. When people flock to Baba with the hope of worldly gain, they are soon made to realise that he is not sitting at his Asram as a mystery-monger purveying sundry worldly benefits to all comers. They find that he is a Guru whose mission is to fish out men from their worldly turmoils and set them on their proper religious path, and that any other benefits got by them are given as a mere foretaste or an appetiser to encourage them in the regular hard course. They are treated to sweets like children at first; but with growth of their power, they are made to face hard tasks which are essential for their further development and to work out their karma.

The class of *Arthas* (*i. e.*, sufferers) is very common among those seeking Baba's aid. Those who have lost their dear relations, those left destitute, those whose disease or infirmity is given up by the doctors as hopeless, those who have been deserted and betrayed, humiliated or trampled upon, and those on the verge of despair not infrequently run up to him, and they invariably command his sympathy. He may try their patience, endurance or faith for a while by delaying or refusing the grant of redress—or he may even promote their internal growth in grace thereby; but ultimately these find that they have not trusted to a broken reed in going to him. He frequently helps them to improve their health and worldly position, at least to some extent. But almost invariably he draws them on in their spiritual paths* and ensures their attaining a high spiritual goal (or *Sadgati*, as it is frequently termed here).

Various are the ways and numerous the lessons Baba gives to such. But a few that are usually placed before most of them we may mention here. Suffering is frequently spoken of by Baba as *Tapas*. People, familiar with the sacred epics and puranas admire Tapas (austerities) and consider it a blessing. Baba, therefore, makes his sufferers feel that in the involuntary suffering that has befallen them, they have the same previleges and opportunities for rising into goodness and glory that the ancient Tapasvis had in their sufferings in their forest life.

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* Baba's Paths are very peculiar and seem strange even to the people of Maharashtra and very strange to Madrasees. With a strong inherited aptitude and leaning to ritualism, he combines a power to make new departures. He has created mantras and fasts and processions that his followers enthusiastically admire. His ways of expressing spiritual truth are adapted to this class.

At the very first visit of this writer to Sakuri, the accommodation he got was so ill-adapted to his constitution that he felt his stay very painful—especially because, he could not get sleep. Looking at his worried face Baba said, "People should rejoice at having to suffer, when sufferings come. Tapasvis go and seek these sufferings. If they come of their own accord—*i. e.*, without any effort on our part—are we not better off ?" Surprised at this doctrine, the writer asked whether one need not make any effort to get rid of the discomforts that befall one. "No," was Baba's emphatic reply, "sufferings are needed and should not be got rid of."

The writer was even more surprised to note that Baba and his devotees were systematically acting on this doctrine. When bugs and ants crawled over Baba, he let them have their way. Once a devotee seated by his side observed the bugs crawling over Baba's body and proceeded to catch them. Baba, however, objected to any interference with those parasites. When fever or other disease comes on, Baba's advice as a rule is "That also is suffering sent by God for the benefit of the patient. If, however, the patient finds it unendurable, he should intently pray to God. This process gives him a double benefit. It takes them closer to God—which is a great spiritual gain. It will remove the disease, if that is God's will". In respect of other ways of cure, Baba often declares that they are undesirable. In the first place, these afflictions come to one as the punishment for past acts and it is better manfully to face them—so that, at one stroke, one's Karmic accounts may be cleared, and one's mind strengthened especially in an attitude of contentment and reverence to God, the author of the law of Karma. Baba stresses the various benefits of suffering in his lectures and exhortations. It is suffering that melts hearts hardened by long selfishness, and indifference to the welfare of others. Suffering (of one's self or of one's dear ones) is needed to convert the cruel-hearted, the fierce, the lecherous, the blasphemous, the intoxication-loving, the callous and other forms of sinners to grace. Without suffering, any quantity of sermons or book-learning may leave the heart unmoved and untouched, while a little suffering may effect more improvement than years of study and meditation. Suffering is what raises man from the brute level into Godhead. The more one suffers, the more godly he becomes. It is the root of *Vyragya* and it gives one the rudiments of Viveka and investing him with virtues necessary for progress makes him long for emancipation from *Samsara*. It is to the sufferer that has been properly prepared by his suffering that the Guru himself proceeds to give the required helping hand. As though to set an example to others, even Avatars of God have undergone great sorrows and sufferings—*e. g.*, Sri Rama, and Sita.*

In this connection we may note a phrase or ** motto constantly on Baba's lips. It is जसे असेल तसे *i. e.*, "Let things be as they may". He has imbibed it even from his childhood. During his early wanderings at Kalyan, a stanza was taught him by a Maharatta lady which may be summed up in that motto. Many are the virtues involved in following it. Contentment, Faith in God, Endurance, Perseverance, Humility, Meekness, Submissive Resignation, etc., are all included in it.

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*To take more modern instances, Buddha's, Jesus', Ramdas', Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda-Swami's sufferings (besides Upasani Baba's) would also readily occur to the reader.

**Baba calls it his Mahavakya.

Even at this stage, there may be readers with an Advaitic turn of mind who rate *sadhanas* and even benefits to be obtained in the next world (Sạdgati) as comparatively low, and these would like to know if nothing higher is to be attained by approaching Sri Upasani Baba. In effect, the question is put: Is Baba himself a God-Realiser and has he enabled any to go to the highest bliss (*i. e.*, beyond the post-graduate course referred to above?). Has any one attained to a faint touch at least of Satchit Ananda under him? There is a Tamil saying' "Kandavar Vindathillai: Vindavar Kandathillai" which means that men of Realisation do not gab about it, and that those who gab are probably men without Realisation- Disciples who have got such benefit from this Guru will not reveal it. The guru's general order is that they should not. Yet luckily enough, much against his will, Kaaya Dhava, an esteemed merchant, whose humility makes him conceal his identity and whose modesty makes him request that the writer should not publish any experience as his, has yet given the following account:

(N. B —Kaaya Dhava is a pseudonym).

In 1924-25, Baba was lecturing 4 or 5 hours at a stretch every day for some days on the subject "Brahma Sathyam Jagan Mithya," etc. (which means that all phenomena are unreal and that the underlying Brahman alone is real). I listened to him as others did. As various doubts arose amongst and expressed by the listeners he used to clear their doubts. But so far as I was concerned, I did not mention my doubts. The most perplexing and unacceptable feature of the teaching appeared to me this. I am listening and Baba is teaching: and these are phenomena. In order that he should teach and I learn anything, these phenomena are essential prerequisites. What is the good of a preaching which denies and annuls the very foundation on which it rests? (It is like a wood-cutter hacking away below him, at the stem on which he sits, so that if he cuts fully, he will fall and die.) I went home and in the calm solitude of the evening I went into my chamiana in the garden and was meditating. Suddenly, Baba's figure appeared before me, and he spoke thus:

"I have nothing to gain by telling you untruth. Besides the sack cloth I wear, I have no need. Why should I tell you anything which is not true?" But I had my doubts yet. Then he said, "To clear your doubt, I shall give you *Anubhava*—a bit of experience or personal realisation". He then placed his big toe on my chest. That had a wonderful effect. The various objects in the world, *e. g.*, garden, Sakuri, friends, etc., all came whirling towards me, entered into my eyes and were lost. Thus in succession, all things of the universe and finally Baba's figure came whirling and disappeared into my eyes. Then I felt a blissful restfulness. How long this continued I could not and cannot tell. I had no reckoning of time in that state. Then I was just wishing that that bliss should become permanent. Simultaneously with the wish, Baba withdrew his foot and object after object emerged into my field of vision. And in a moment, Baba disappeared and all my surroundings were just what they were before I started meditation—*i.e.*, before this vision came in.

Thus Kaaya Dhava realised that the world, Sakuri, friends, etc., appeared and disappeared and were thus *Anitya* or *Mitya*, while the bliss into which they disappeared, and of which he had a foretaste was the residuary truth—*Satya*.* One Sonibai, daughter of Bhau Saheb Singvekar, an ardent devotee of Baba, informed him that in her meditation the world disappeared, leaving in her a feeling of bliss. Some other devotees also have communicated to him similar experiences of their own.

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* *Satya* or the Real is that which *always* exists—*i. e.*, in the past, Present and future. All else is unreal.

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CHAPTER XXV

A DAY AT SAKURI WITH BABA

One reaches Sakuri from Bombay *via* Manmad and Chitali and from the South by Dhond and Chitali. From the station Chitali, Sakuri is nine miles to be reached by bus. Even when one is a mile or two away he catches sight of the tall tower of Datta temple. Going into it, one notes that there are two floors in it, and in the lower floor is the holy of holies with a hall in the style of modern churches, having polished pillars, nicely plastered wall, and numerous holy pictures stuck high up. There are two pairs of Datta's holy feet, (made of silver). The inner one is the holiest of all where every day, during all the hours of day or night, Brahmins are regularly carrying on voluntary pooja and *Abhisheka*, i. e., a perennial current of water is kept pouring on it. Perpetual lamps are also kept burning there by the side of the large-size pictures of Sri Upasani Baba and his guru Sri Sai Baba.* There are also a few images of Krishna, etc. *Arati* is performed before these feet, the images and pictures in this inner sanctuary at least thrice a day, at about 5 A.M., 11 A.M. and

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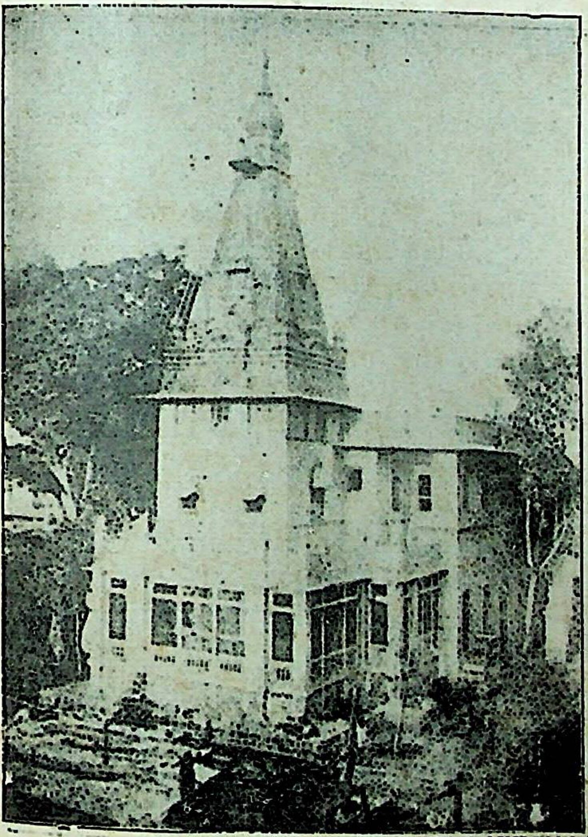
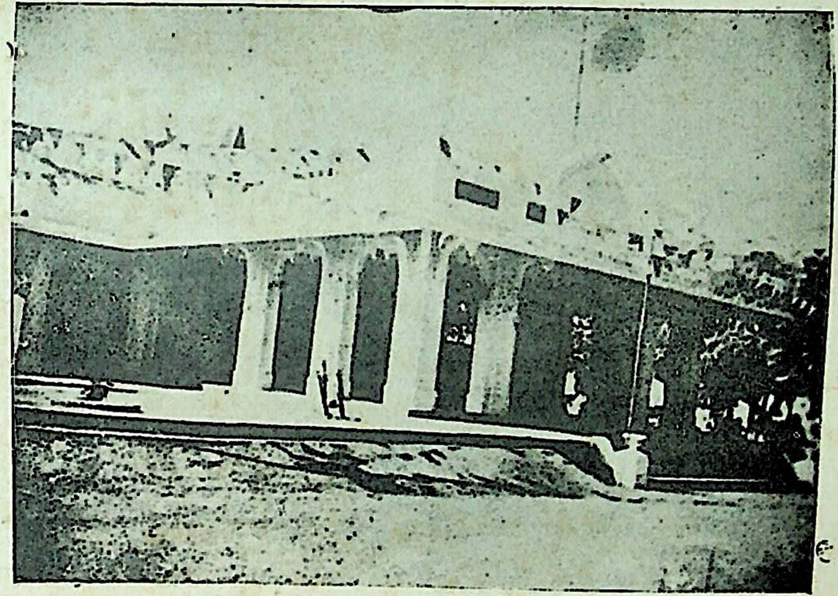
* On 14-1-1943 a magnificient marble image of Sree Datta was installed in front of these pictures.



DATTA MANDIR.



SABHA MANDAP, OR ARATI HALL.

7 P.M,—at which the resident disciples and visitors attend. The Arati consists of prayers to Sri Baba and to God, praise, and the recalling of essential truths of Ethics and religion. After the lights are waved and the Gurus and Gods. are worshipped in the customary manner (the ritual is mostly in the local vernacular), the time comes for each votary to make his offering of flowers and leaves to Gods and the Guru. Then, after receipt of *Tirtha prasad*. (*i. e.*, water washing the sacred feet* of Baba as Datta) they leave the temple.

From the temple on each of the above three occasions, the votaries walk on (for 100 yards) to the Guru's residence. There in the morning service, the Guru when he is present in the village sometimes attends. The usual invocation for rousing God and Guru, so common in all the temples, is recited here. Hower, the ritual is so artistically interwoven with solemn reminders of the vanity of life, the helplessness of the votary to face and solve the problem of existence, the correct principles which are absolutely essential to aceept and adopt before one gets salvation, and the description of the powerful Guru (Sri Upasani Baba) who can ferry the devotee across all difficulties to the goal,—*i. e.*, every one who has surrendered himself (*i. e*-, body, soul and property) unreservedly at his feet.

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* The example of the devotees of Pandarinath is copied all over India. The dust of the feet of every devotee is reverently taken by the other devotees and placed on their heads. The dust and water washing the feet of the Guru or the place where a light, symbolical of God was placed are similarly reverenced and carried by each devotee to his own head. Gurugita and Srimad Bhagavata support this practice. Emperor Bali washed Brahmins' feet and sprinkled the washed out water on his own head.

Baba (when he is in the village) usually attends at the noon and night services at his residence (Arati Hall). Here the special additional feature of the service is that each votary goes upto Baba's *Pinjra** (cage), places flowers there at Baba's feet and at, the feet of his foremost disciple, Sati

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**Pinjra* is a cage about 6ft. by 5 ft. by 5ft. covered on the top, having a wall behind with the other sides enclosed by silver-plated metal bars and bamboo bars. It is furnished with neat mats or rugs and several bolsters—for the use of Baba and his ladies (Satis) when they sit there—as they do on some occasions for receiving worship. (Shortly after Baba's samadhi on 24-12-1941, a life-like marble image of Baba was installed inside this Pinjra on 14-1-1942).

Godavari Bai, and then places his or her forehead on the extended foot of Baba.

Then after Baba's praise (in singing which, as in the preceding portions of the ritual; all present join), holy songs (found in "Bhajanavali") are sung by a band of some twenty to forty ladies to the accompaniment of a harmonium. These ladies stand in the main pillared hall in a ring, *i. e.*, between Baba and his pinjra and the other ladies on the one side, and the male congregation on the other. These ladies go round and round with short sticks in hand, (with which they beat time) and perform evolutions known in the Southern presidency as *Kolattam* and in Maharashtra as *Tippari*. The hymns contain the essential and saving truths of Religion, impress on the votaries the need for raising themselves ethically and spiritually and give them the assurance of ultimate success by placing absolute and childlike trust in their Guru, Sri Baba, who must be everything to them. The songs are partly well-known hymns in Mahratti and Hindi, prevalent throughout the province and partly special compositions by Baba's devotees relating to Baba in particular. At the close of the noon Arati, *Prasad* is given to every devotee—which consists, first, of the water and milk used in washing the Guru's feet, and next (occasionally), of some fruits or other edibles that come as presents to Baba.

The programme of the devotees at Sakuri is generally to rise at about 4 A.M., in response to a general bell, to finish one's ablutions and join the morning Arati at the temple and in the Guru's residence. He or she next takes some coffee or tea, (if so inclined), and attends to any service that is handy. The lady devotees proceed to sweep the floor at the temple or at the Guru's residence, cover it with liquid cow-dung, ornament it with lines and figures of white or colored powder and clean the clothes and utensils needed for the Guru or the various shrines. The males attend to sundry services at the temple or garden. People attend to their usual *Sandhya*, *Anushtana* and *Pooja* in the mornings and to their culinary operations. Most of the devotees live in the dharmasalas or in the Datta temple and the major portion cook their own food. All through the day and night, regular bhajan (i.e., prayers with music) goes on in the hall of Datta temple; between noon and midnight; the ladies come up in batches of two or even singly and carry on the bhajan; between midnight and noon the male devotees carry on bhajan, either singly or in batches. Every devotee is expected to spend a fixed hour or two in such bhajan. This is part of the regimen. At nine in the morning a group bhajan of the males is carried on at the gate of Baba's residence, and at six in the evening the ladies carry on their group bhajan in the same place. Between 10 and 11 A.M., Baba comes out and sits near the *pinjra* and all devotees and visitors take their first morning *darsana* of Baba and have sometimes an opportunity to talk a few words with him.

Half an hour later, the Naivedya bell is rung and devotees that have cooked their food and desire to offer it to the Guru-God before partaking of it, are given the opportunity to take a part of it to Baba's residence. That is usually received by the lady pupils, "Kanyas", who return a little portion as *prasad*, (*i. e.*, blessed gift) of Baba to be taken by the devotee. At noon, Arati goes on in the temple for an hour and next at the Guru's residence for an hour or two. This is the chief function of each day. At this Arati before the Guru, sacred books are generally read or recited by all. Daily a chapter or two of the Bhagavad Gita or some verses from Ashtavakra Gita are taken up for reading. Of visitors (who are allowed only if they come to join in the worship of Baba) a few are generally present; with the Guru's prasad and the holy songs of the ladies (with their Tippari) the proceedings come to a close. After a short interval for meals, the time between 3 and 6 P.M., is variously occupied, by various devotees. Baba himself then grants formal interviews to those who call upon him. Though the grant is formal and after oral application the conversation with Baba is not formal. People pour out their grievances into his ear and find him very sympathetic. He weeps with those who weep and rejoices with those who rejoice—not as a matter of diplomacy or "good manners," but by the sterling goodness of his heart. He offers some assistance and redress to each of these in their spiritual course. Not a few go to seek his aid in selecting the mantra, the pooja, the *Satkarma* (good works) needed for them and find that they could not have chosen a better guide. Baba has an instinctive perception into the nature and needs of each devotee and gives his advice exactly suited to each. People who approach him and work under his supervision get freed from their cares, sorrows and troubles, purify their hearts, strengthen their virtuous resolves and obtain increased power of will, and finer spiritual power. He deprecates people going to him for developing mere *siddhis* (*i. e.*, Thaumaturgic powers) and when they get unconsciously manifested, he advises them to be silent about these and to go on still with their worship of God and their Guru. These are some among the numerous topics he discusses at these interviews. Occassionally (specially on festive occasions) when a large number of devotees and strangers from outside flock to his Asram, he delivers his sermon or lecture (Pravachan.) It is a sight to see how the devotees flock to hear him, how they hang on his lips and suck in each word uttered by him, as though it was nectar. A critical observer after taking down the lecture verbatim will note with surprise the absence of any oratorical or literary merit, any wealth of learning or logic in them. It is the personality of the speaker, the belief that as a *Sat–Purusha* he has God-realisation and is talking out of his own realisation and not from books, the feeling also that he is a good soul with vast and mysterious powers—it is the conjoint effect of these that should probably explain the magic spell in which he holds his audience even for three or four hours at a stretch on trite common-place subjects, and makes them wonder बाबा कैसा जादु डाला which means "How has Baba cast over us a magic spell?" Between 3 and 6 P.M., young ladies at Baba's residence study Sanskrit and so through some easy religious works besides learning songs and sacred music. Sometimes sacred works are read or Harikathas performed between 5 and 6 P.M., at the temple. The next hour is devoted to group bhajan by the ladies at the gate of Baba, and then follows the Arati service at the temple and at Baba's residence. These proceedings terminate with the holy music of the choir of ladies (and Tippari) about 10 P.M.—which is the time for all to retire to rest.

**i. e.*, the placing of the devotee's head on the Guru's feet.

Thus the devotees' time both day and night is fully occupied, with godly work or rest; sloth, idle chat and "the 'world's ignoble strife" are kept out—discussions and even newspapers being banned. The effect of such a course can be easily inferred. Three months after the arrival of this writer at Sakuri, he was asked how his "vasanas"* were faring, by Baba. "They have not much chance of surviving" was the reply "You give them neither foothold nor time, Baba, when every minute has its allotted task. They are starved, smothered out, or strangled, so long as one stays at the Asram..'

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*Referring to Baba's question to him, *cf*.p. 161.

CHAPTER XXVI

SOME LESSONS IN CONCLUSION

Before concluding this work, a few words might be offered as explanation of the preceeding chapters to avoid misapprehension, and a few practical lessons may be derived from the life that has been described so far.

Hasty readers of the earlier chapters, especially those dealing with hallucinations and delusions, might rush to the conclusion that Kasinath Maharaj was in point of fact insane and be thereby led to underrate his worth, services and teachings. Such a conclusion would be unwarranted and in so far as they are due to what has been written above, the writer's duty is immediately to supply the correction here. In this book, the facts were largely taken up as narrated in the Mahrathi "Upasani Lilamrita." The terms 'Bramishtavasta' and 'Unmathavasta' found there have been literally translated as crazy and insane states. But these Mahrathi or Sanskrit words are said to possess a special additional signification, not found in the above English words. Besides the general difficulty of finding exact equivalents for Sanskrit or Mahrathi words (carrying especially various shades of meaning in English, there are special difficulties in the present case. The subject matter of these words is Abnormal (Religious) Psychology and this is in a very imperfect stage of development. When even the facts and ideas involved in that science are mostly unascertained, exact terminology is sure to be lacking. Without further enlarging on the subject, the writer has to warn the reader that "the state resembling crazy and insane states," referred to above, is not the state of persons we ordinarily describe by those terms. The former state was kept under the special supervision of a Sad-Guru with vast powers (to convert the most worthless material into the noblest) and used as the stepping stone to psychic or spiritual greatness or God-Realisation,—and as stated already, remarkable physical, mental and spiritual powers have been maintained or developed in Baba under the Guru's guidance in that state.

Even were it otherwise, the deducing therefrom conclusions as to the worth of Baba and his teachings would still be unwarranted. What we are now concerned with is to estimate the worth of and if possible to use, a personality that is now swaying the minds and hearts and influencing the fortunes of hundreds or thousands—

espicially in the Bombay Presidency. Incidentally, the history of that personality has been touched upon, to satisfy a natural curiosity. But antecedent history is not to be identified with the present state. Poor humble beginnings,—it may be even despicable beginnings—may have and often do have grand and glorious endings. The elders say— नदिमूल ऋषेर्मूलं पृष्टव्यं न कदाचन They deprecate a too curious investigation into the origins of sacred rivers and holy sages, lest the discovery of antecedent foulness or littleness in the earlier stages should lead to the existing sacredness and holiness of the river and saint being underrated. The same advice is very aptly conveyed by W. R. James on this very matter. He says it is a gratuitous "assumption that spiritual value is undone if lowly origin be asserted". "Medical materialism finishes up Saint Paul by calling his vision on the road to Damascus a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic. It snuffs out Saint Teresa as an hysteric, Saint Francis of Assisi as an hereditary degenerate". It "then thinks that the spiritual authority of all such personages is successfuly undermined....". When we think certain states of mind superior to others, is it ever because of what we know concerning their organic antecedents? No!"

Varieties of religious experience, Chap. 1, Pp. 10-15.

That a pathological state should be found so closely associated with religious eminence or genius would not be a matter of surprise to Indians familiar with such states in Sri Krishna Chaitanya, and other great saints who are held in the highest esteem by tens of thousands.

With this preface, we shall proceed to consider if any lessons are to be derived for the use of the common run of men from the sketch which we are now closing. There are so many elements of mysterious super-natural guidance in it that guidance therefrom for common men may be despaired of. Yet, after calm and patient analysis, several valuable lessons can be derived. But before starting on this analysis, it is well to record a warning Baba often gives. He asks people to beware of the fallacy—"*Post hoc ergo propter hoc*". Let not people imagine that *tapas* in a mountain cave must necessarily produce prolonged samadhi; that *pranayama* at Somnath Lingam must induce stoppage of respiration and circulation; nor should people take these as the causes of Baba's spiritual eminence. These are perhaps themselves the indices and the result of *Poorva Karma*; and he always insists that in tracing back the cause of estimable results, one should note that *the* cause and *the whole cause* is a vast mass of *Poorva Karma* of many generations. People should not close their eyes to the chain of causes behind the proximate cause. In his own case, he traces his success in this birth to the numerous efforts he made and the numerous good works (*punya*) he performed in many a past birth. The main thing for the reader to note in this connection is the conclusion drawn by Baba from the above facts- As one grand result is the effect of centuries of *Punya*, it is the duty of every sensible person to attend to *Punya*, good works incessantly. Every person may and should go on attending to such works with perfect equanimity—as the result is in powerful, just, all knowing hands and will unfold itself in God's good time. Develop *Satwa*: Do Dharmic Karma, *i. e.*, holy acts; Be always doing good; Control your desire and be peaceful, and hopeful. Have faith. Learn resignation to God's will. These are the main things in life, which everyone can and should attend to. These are Baba's teachings, and the chief lessons to be drawn from his life.

Some readers may get impatient at being given such general advice, and say that every one knows all this, though every one does not carry out such ideas in his daily life. Such readers are anxious to know the distinctive and characteristic features of Baba's teaching and practice—which are derived from a study of Baba, his life and his works. Baba's views about sorrow, the necessity to welcome and endure it and treat it as one's tapas. (*i. e.*, voluntarily chosen suffering) are fairly characteristic of him. This is what he has acted on and exemplified by his own conduct. We see the patience, endurance, contentment, meekness, humility, resignation and other excellant virtues which this practice has developed in him, and which have so well equipped him for his destined position as the doctor of the thousands of souls.

If the reader regards even these as very familiar truths or virtues, and wants to know things or views quite peculiar to Baba, this writer may proceed to specify them—with a word of preliminary protest that Baba is estimable not by reason of things wholly peculiar to himself but by the adoption of common virtues of self-restraint, intense faith, Guru Seva (service to the Guru) unswerving adherence to Swadharma, wide and perpetual beneficence, charity, etc.

The following views propounded by Upasani Baba (upon which part of his activities and institutions are based) do not, so far as the writer is aware, appear to have been propounded by any other writer on religion, whether of the past or now living and the views may be regarded as peculiar to Baba or unique.

Woman's "Prarabdha Rahitatva," i.e., freedom from *Prarabdha,* is the first of these views. We must explain how Baba uses the expression *Prarabdha* or *Karma Prarabdha.* He means by it merely *karma bhanda—i. e.,* effects, good or evil of karma; and he includes in the term *prarabdha*—not merely what is strictly *prarabdha, i.e.,* karmic effect which has *begun* to operate, but also *Sanchita* and *Kriyamana.* He includes both *karma phala* and *karma vasana* or *samskara* under that term. His ideas are as follows:—

(1) Men and women, by reason of their differing forms (Akara) or bodies, belong to distinct classes. The *Gunas* or qualities with which they are endowed by nature, and their *Dharma* that is, duties or rules of conduct to be followed by them, are different. They are intended in the plan of the Creator to play different parts; their functions are different.

(2) *Rajas* is necessary for the progress of the world. Man as a class is Rajasic.

He has to face and carry on the struggle and fight the battle of life, and has to indulge in Rajasic Karma. This results in producing *Karma prarabdha* in Baba's words are *karma bandha* in ordinary parlance. Woman as a class is more sattvic; she naturally abstains from Rajasic and Tamasic Karma and naturally has less of karmic bondage, clogging her soul. Hence woman must be considered as *Prarabdha-Rahita.*

(3) *Prarabdha i. e.. karma bandha* or bondage of karma is produced by and results from karma deliberately initiated undertaken or performed on one's own responsibility. It does not result from what is done under necessity, *e. g.*, for merely keeping up life, or by persons under minority or in a state of tutelage, dependance, or protection of others. The ancient Hindu Lawgiver Manu, has laid down that woman as a class should not live or act in independance but only under the protection and advice of her father during maidenhood, husband during coverture, and son or respected elder, etc., during widowhood.

(4) By not acting on her own initiative and responsibility, *i. e.*, with independence, and by avoiding Rajasic and Tamasic activities and karma, woman becomes *Prarabdha Rahita*, that is, practically

or comparatively free from prarabdha or karmic bondage; and therefore power from on high is increasingly manifested in her.

(5) Woman is thereby enabled to purify and ennoble the lives of her husband and other male members of the family, and to obliterate and destroy the evil effects of their karma, that is, she becomes their redeemer and saviour. This must be considered the noble task allotted her by Providence, her true function and mission.

(6) It therefore behoves all to help woman to live in this pure state, and to fulfil her true destiny and not to lead or force her into *Vyavahara* or activities inconsistent therewith.

(7) In this way, woman will be able not only to attain the divine state herself but will also lead others to the same state.

(8) If a male cannot raise himself to God-head, he can easily marry a girl and see that she is not engaged in Rajasic and Tamasic affairs. She will thus be free from *Prarabdha* and by her divine power will raise him to Godhead.

Dana

1. Dana is a gift or surrender to God for attaining spiritual benefit.

2. The surrender of everything one owns or possesses is, of course, the highest *dana*.

3. Possessions include not merely inanimate objects, but also animate, *e. g.*, beasts, human beings such as (1) sons. (2) daughters, (3) wife, etc., and (4) one's own body, mind and soul.

4. The surrender of the last four is named *Atma Arpana* to God.

5. Sons and daughters are the product of the parents' body, mind and soul; and hence their gift is the parents' *Atmarpana*.

6. A gift to a *Sat-Purusha*, *i. e.*, one who has realised himself as Brahman or God is a gift or 'arpana' to God.

7. God being invisible, people cannot easily make gifts to Him. But this difficulty does not arise in the case of gifts to a *Sat-Purusha*.

8. The giving or "Dana" of a girl by her parents or by herself if adult to a perfect *Sat--Purusha* who has attained realisation ensures the *Uddhara-Gati* or liberation from the cycle of births and deaths not only of the girl herself but of 21 generations of ancestors on her father's and 21 on her mother's side.

9. By uniting herself in marriage with a perfect *Sat–Purusha*, a girl's *prarabdha*, that is, all her past Vasanas and Phalas are completely destroyed and extinguished, and no new Karma Prarabdha is formed.

The above is a very rough sketch of Baba's views. Within the last few years eight* or more persons have made Kanyadana of their daughters or wards by marrying them to him, regarding him as a perfect *Sat-Purusha* who has attained realisation. He declares that all these women have become *Prarabdha Rahita* even now.

The writer has gone into much greater detail than is warranted by the dimensions of this introductory booklet—as this is the most peculiar part of Baba's work. To gather more details of this part and to learn other ideas of Baba, there are numerous works of his (many of which have been translated into English though not published) and if the reader is desirous of more information, they may supply* him with it. But as stated already, it is not for the above or any other pecularity in Baba's views or conduct, that he is worthy of esteem. He should be esteemed and revered for his brilliant life of virtues and austerities, for his endurance, patience, meekness, forgiveness, selflessness, kindness, charity, etc.,—and above all for the splendid and solid work turned out by him as the spiritual doctor, guide, pole–star or saviour of thousands of souls who are ever singing his praise as being

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*The present No. of Kanyas is 24.

> "The pillar of *his* people's hope,
>
> The centre of *his* world's desire."

Following the high example of the Gita, this concluding chapter should emphasize the central and most momentous lesson of the book and point out its practical application. That lesson is that FAITH SAVES. Its application also is clear. Should there be any reader of this work, that is feeling sorely oppressed by temporal or spiritual troubles and is panting for relief, that person may try to summon up sufficient faith in Upasani Baba, despite the latter's shortcomings, weak points, imperfection* or oddity of person, dress, language, ideas and behaviour, and make a fervent appeal to him for relief, with all one's heart, with all one's soul, with all one's strength; and relief will probably be experienced sooner or later. This is a matter of daily experience with many persons; and if a few more can derive such benefits as a result of reading this booklet, it would not have been written in vain.

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*Some extracts are given in the Appendix.

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*Perfection is reached through imperfection. Jesus Christ disclaimed being good and declared that none but God is good; yet many reach God through Jesus. The shortcomings and weaknesses of one's guru are naturally swept aside and forgotten in the full tide of one's love and devotion to him; and the guru thus idealised works wonders for and saves the loving and devoted disciple. The perfect is always built upon the imperfect. All, all on earth, including many towering personages have their touch of earth, their weakpoints alongside of their goodness or greatness. Many persons can excel Upasani Baba in the clear and impressive exposition or elucidation of ethical and Vedantic truth, especially about the nature of God or Brahman; but few can excel him in training and carrying one on to God or Brahman, through the Paths of Devotion, good works, etc.

THE SAGE OF SAKURI

PART II

BY

MR. S. SUBBA RAO, M. A.

1948.

PREFACE

The first English biography of Shree Upasani Maharaj of Sakuri was published in 1934 by Mr. B. V. Narasimha Swamy. A second edition appeared in 1938 with a number of Appendices added to it. As the later events of Shri Baba's life and activity do not fall within the compass of this booklet, it is thought desirable that a third edition should be brought forth supplementing 'The Sage of Sakuri' with a few Chapters dealing with the later events of Baba's life till his Mahasamadhi on 24th December 1941.

The whole book is entitled 'The Sage of Sakuri'—Mr. Narasimha Swamy's booklet being termed Part I and the subsequent addition Part II.

The appendices which originally appeared at the end of Part I now find a natural and befitting place for themselves at the close of Part II.

Baba's permanent settlement at Sakuri (1918) has been taken as a convenient starting point for the narrative of the Second Part; for, though a few of the later events have appeared towards the close of Part I, they are too brief and sketchy to give room to the charge of overlapping.

The publishers of the present edition are highly thankful to Mr. Narasimha Swamy for readily permitting his booklet to be combined with the supplement and published in one Volume.

The grateful thanks of the publishers are also due to Mr. S. Subbarao, M.A., a devotee of Shri Baba, for his very kind help in composing the Second Part of this Volume.

B. T. WAGH,

Publisher.

THE SAGE OF SAKURI.

PART II

CHAPTER I

SETTLEMENT AND EXPANSION

"It is an ancient maxim that where the two opposite forces of good and evil exhibit themselves spontaneously in varying degrees without any deliberate effort—material or otherwise—on the part of any one to produce either; and about which place or the individual responsible for it people go on imagining good or evil according to their own intellectual capasity, and in consequence reap the fruits thereof, it is an unmistakable indication that the Hand of the Almighty is at work in such a place or individual. Such an Institution or Individual comes into existence as a result of the Will of the Unseen Power guiding and controlling the destinies of the Universe". Upasanisthan, Sakuri, is a living exemplification of the above maxim.

At the request of some of the devotees from Sakuri, Shree Upasani Baba settled down here early in 1918, 'in the cremation ground on the western outskirts of the village. A Zopadi (hut) was built for him in the place where the spacious Datta Man dir now stands. A few months later, i.e., in October 1918, Shree Sai Baba of Shirdi took Samadhi on Dasara day. In front of this Zopadi, a small temple was erected in which were placed the photos of Shree Sai Baba and Shree Upasani Baba, and one Mr. Kamalakar Govind Dixit (usually known as Guruji), an old devotee of Sai Baba who had kept company with Upasani Baba in the Khandoba temple at Shirdi and had been attached to him since, began to perform the daily Puja and Arati. This Dixit used to perform Puja and Arati at the Samadhi of Sai Baba as had been arranged by Mr. Booty of Nagpur. But his attachment to Upasani Baba was so great that in spite of the latter's remonstrances, Mr. Dixit left Shirdi and settled down at Sakuri. A few months later he was joined by Mr. Bapusaheb Jog, a retired engineer, who had been performing Sai Baba's Puja and Arati. Shortly before taking Samadhi, Sai Baba had actually thrown out a clear hint to Bapusaheb that in future the latter would behold him as a digambar (the naked one). After Sai's Samadhi, he had a vision in which he received a distinct message to the effect that thenceforth Sai Bab a was at Sakuri and Bapu Saheb should proceed there and continue his Puja and Arati. Bapusaheb had also repeated visions at the time of Darashana in which Upasani would present himself as Sai Baba and in a few moments Sai would transform himself into Upasani. He was therefore firmly convinced that his Guru now existed in the form of Upasani Baba, the nude Sage of Sakuri, and so he came to live with him. Upasani Baba protested in vain; Mr, Jog's conviction was too strong to be shaken.

No sooner had Baba settled down here than his old devotees began to flock round him from all sides. Mr. Amidas Mehta from Bombay, an old devotee of Sai Baba, prevailed upon Baba to visit Bombay. After a month's stay there, Baba returned to Sakuri. About this time Mr. Dasopant Khasnis of Kharagpur fell seriously ill and insisted upon being taken to Sakuri, in spite of his precarious condition. Advices and remonstrances proving futile, he was at last brought over to Sakuri where, by his unshaken faith in Baba and the grace of the Sadguru, he recovered in a fortnight. He had resigned his job and had no wish to take to service again, but Baba pressed him to go back to Kharagpur and once again offer his services. His story being told, the authorities without any ado reinstated him in his old place and on the same salary.

Amongst the foremost of the new devotees that gathered round Baba at this time was a young Parsi gentleman, Meherwan by name, (now known to the world as Meher Baba). He was at the time a great favourite with Baba who used to spend several hours continuously with him. This young man stayed for some years at Sakuri and was responsible for the first biography of Upasani Baba in Marathi by Natha Madhav. He also composed a Gujarati Arati on Baba which was for some time recited at Sakuri. From about the end of 1922, he stopped coming to Sakuri and it was not till October 1941, a few months before Baba took Mahasamadhi, that he met his Guru again.

In 1918-1919 influenza of a virulent type spread throughout the length and bredth of India and devastated the whole country. Thousands perished and at Sakuri so many fell victims to it that any were hardly left to dispose off the dead. When Baba was informed of this state of things, he took it upon himself to carry the dead to the cremation ground and give them the last rites, thereby absorbing them into himself and freeing them from the cycle of births and deaths.

Early in 1920, Baba made known his intention of going to Benares in connection with Sai Baba's anniversary. A number of devotees proposed to accompany him from Sakuri, as well as from Poona, Bombay and other places. Baba directed the party to leave a fortnight after his depar ture, and meet him at Benares. From Chitali he went by train to Ankai, where he took Darshana of Agashti Ashram on a hill near Ankai. How and when he travelled from there to Benares is a mystery, but from occasional hints thrown out by Baba in later years, it is believed that he had had recourse to the same yogic powers as had brought him from Kharagpur to Nagpur within a couple of hours. It appears that from Ankai he had been to Omkareshwar on the banks of the Nurbada and from there to Allahabad via Ujjain. At Allahabad he stayed with a Mahamedan for a couple of nights and there disappearing, arrived at Benares. For four days he sat steady and unmoved at a sequestered place on the banks of the holy Ganges and performed such Kriyas (rites) as he deemed fit and necessary for the proper discharge of his duty to Sai Baba and other saints. After a bath in the Ganges, he went about the city and attracted the attention of several people in spite of his best attempts to avoid public notice. He was taken to the house of one Ramkrishna Dixit where crowds gathered round for Darshana. Arrangements were made to accommodate the devotees that had come from Sakuri and other places. In course of a casual round in the city, Baba chanced upon an open space near a temple of Maruti with a small Zopadi in it and he made this his residence during his stay at Benares. As the Zopadi was roofed over with galvanized iron sheets not very high from the ground, the summer heat was greatly intensified and in spite of it, Baba used to sit there the live-long day and give Darshana to the thousands that flocked round him. A Pandal was erected to accommodate the visitors. From Sakuri Bapusaheb Jog, Yeshwantrao Boravke, Durgabai, Meherwan and others had been there. Several devotees from Bombay and Poona including a few Parsees and Rao Saheb Sathe had come over there, as also

Dasopant Khasnis and his wife Laxmibai from Kharagpur. At the time of Ram Navami, Baba had ordered the performance of Shatachandi Yaga with the recitation of Bhagwat Gita, Rama Gita, Saptashati, Adhyatma Ramayana and Vishnu Sahasranama by forty Brahmins and the repetition of Gayatri Mantra by more Brahmins. The whole function was brought to a close by Hanuman Jayanti. There was huge Brahmin and poor feeding, presentation of clothes etc., and the gifting away of fifty cows with calves. It was at this time that a paralytic was miraculously cured by Baba's grace.

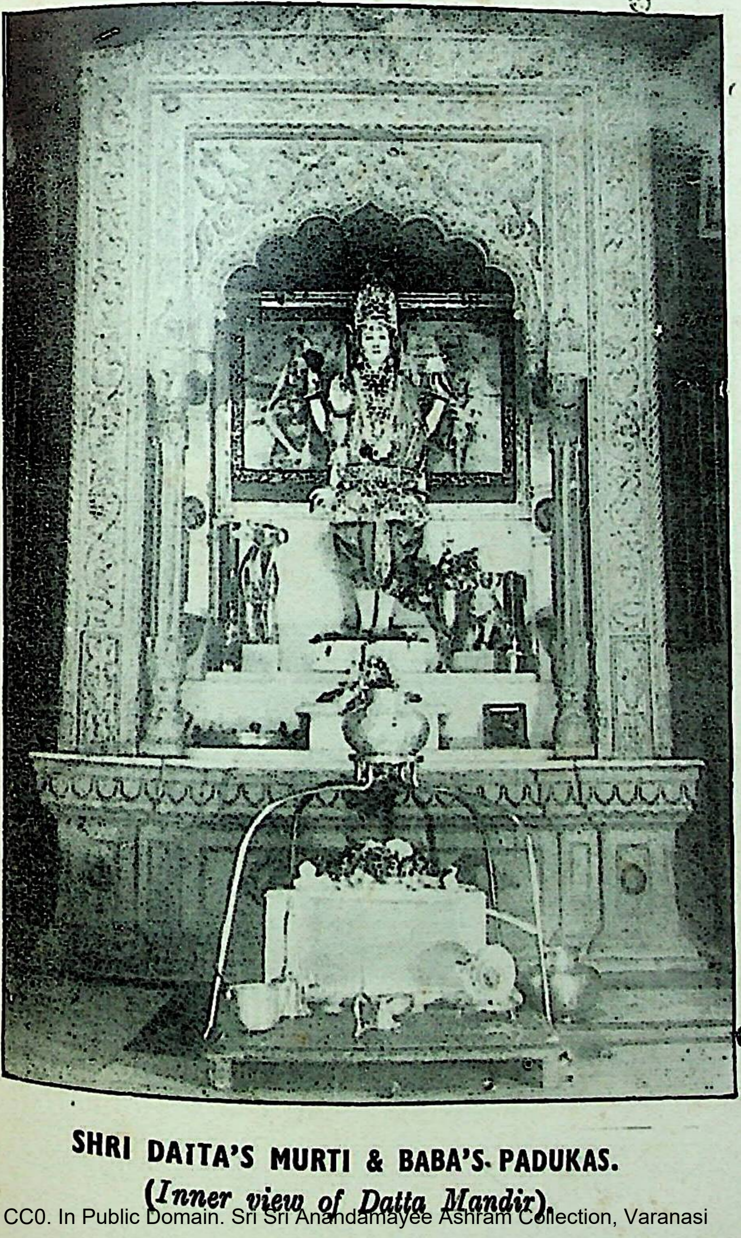
After this function was brought to a successful close, Baba sent away all his devotees. Dasopant Khasnis who had been greatly devoted to Baba had by this time an inkling into his future by the grace of the Sadguru and he stoutly refused to leave Baba and Benares. He also hinted to Bapusaheb that the latter might have some personal trouble and inconvenience on his account. Bapusaheb could not then understand the import of Dasopant's statement, but later events made it clear. Dasopant soon took ill and was serious. Baba was by his bedside, administering spiritual comfort to him and his sorrowing wife. On the eighth day, Mr. Khasnis told his wife that she would not be able to see him the next day and that she should thereafter continue her devotion to Baba as before. On the morning of the 9th day Mr. Dasopant expired at sunrise in the presence of his Sadguru and thus became one with him. Bapusaheb was appointed to perform the last rites of Dasopant and after a fortnight's stay at Benares for this purpose, he and Mrs. Khasnis left for Sakuri. Baba and Durgabai left for Allahabad, and after visiting Prayag and Ayodhya returned to Sakuri.

In October of the same year, Mr. Amidas Mehta prevailed upon Baba to go over to Bombay for the second Anniversary of Sai Baba. Devotees from all parts including Kharagpur poured in. Baba was put up at Madhav Baug where there was sufficient accommodation for the huge congregation. Namasaptah was celebrated in honour of Sai Baba's memory. Poor feeding and distribution of alms and clothing on a large scale formed part of the proceedings, and amidst great jubilee and rejoicings the function came to a close. Baba's photo was taken, the devotees dispersed and Baba returned to Sakuri.

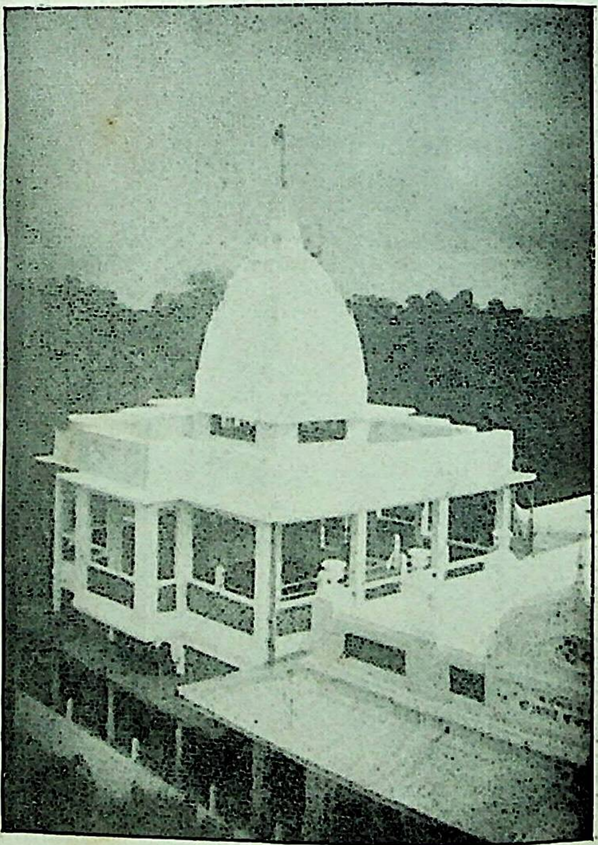
For all the important Hindu festivals like Ramanavami, Gurupoornima, Geneshchaturthi, Dasara, Sankranti, Shivaratri etc., devotees used to congregate at Sakuri. As they were firmly convinced of Baba's 'Siddha Avastha' or the state of spiritual perfection, they were eager to establish a firm connection with him by the performance of Satkarmas or acts of merit in his presence or by his directions, thereby paving the way for both spiritual and temporal happiness. As the Sadguru stands for Brahma, Vishnu and Shankar, devotees worship Baba taking him to be the embodiment of the particular deity they have to worship on any particular occasion. On such occasions gifts of money and materials were freely offered but Baba consistently refused to accept them. The devotees held that, as the money was earned by the sweat of their brow, the offer of money meant the offer of their body and mind for the service of God. No arguments, however, could prevail upon Baba to accede to their demand. Therefore they thought it best to deposit all their gifts with one of Baba's tried devotees, Yeshwantrao Boravke, for being used as occasion demanded.

About this time the small temple in front of Baba's Zopadi was blown off by a violent gust of wind and it was necessary that another should be raised in its place. The need for constructing a number of rooms or a Dharamshala to accommodate the ever increasing influx of devotees was equally imperative. Baba's permission was therefore obtained and the work started. The devotees' volunteered ther- services in the work of construction and with the help of a few masons and carpenters who were also devoted to Baba, the work progressed very briskly.

At this time, to avoid the noise and the bustle of the workmen, Baba removed himself to a lonely place in the cremation ground a few yards south-east of his former Zopadi. The place was thickly overgrown with prickly pear bushes (cactus) and no one ventured there for fear of thorns and the numerous snakes that freely moved about. It was so desolate that people dreaded to go there even during day. Here a second Zopadi was erected for Baba who never allowed anyone to approach him for about a year and a half. If any one dared to do so, he would drive him away by pelting stones at him. For giving Darshana to the devotees however, he used to come to the old Zopadi. After a :year and a half, Baba said that all the evil spirits that had formerly infested that cremation ground had been liberated and devotees could thenceforward freely visit him in his new Zopadi. Having finished Pooja and Arati in the



SHRI DATTA'S MURTI & BABA'S PADUKAS.
(*Inner view of Datta Mandir*).



YADNYA MANDAP.

temple, devotees would go for Baba's Darshana in his new Zopadi both in the afternoon and at night. On such occasions Baba would discourse to them on religious and spiritual subjects, clarifying many abstruse metaphysical problems by his clear and unambiguous explanation born of experience. Devotees soon started the work of clearing the prickly pear bushes and cleaning the surrounding area. Bilva trees were planted in great numbers, as the Bilva happens to be the favourite tree of Shankara and the cremation ground His favourite residence. A number of mango trees too were planted, only a few of which now survive. Amongst these mango trees grew up a mango creeper (Amra Valli) which is a rarity and is only heard of in the Puranas. The appearance of this mango creeper was in itself a miracle and was an unmistakable indication of Baba's spiritual greatness. This creeper was made to climb up a pandal under which a Zopadi consisting of a couple of rooms was built for Baba in later years. It was here that Baba was wont to spend the greater part of his time, and it was here that he cast off his mortal coil on 24th December 1941. The mango creeper has long since been dead but the Zopadi still bears the name of "Vela khalichi Zopadi" or the hut under the (mango) creeper. Here are preserved the chair on which Baba used to sit at times and the pair of sandals of gunny bag which he put on occasionally.

As years rolled on, Baba's influence and fame spread far and wide. Thousands were assembling at Sakuri for all important Hindu festivals and to answer their growing needs, several well-to-do devotees freely came forward with liberal donations and erected a number of Dharmashalas. A lady related to the Maharaja of Gwalior came to Baba for the fulfilment of a desire. She wished to adopt a boy from Belgaum, but the Maharaja of Gwalior would not sanction the boy of her choice. She had been to several saints but could not have her wish fulfilled. At last Upasani Baba's reputation reachad her ears and she directed the boy and his father to Baba. A little later, she came over to Sakuri to present her case in person to Baba and sue for his grace. The boy and his father continued their stay at Sakuri for about nine months in Baba's seva. The Maharaja was obdurate but strange to say, he woke up one midnight and wrote out the required sanction for the lady, just on the eve of his departure to England. The lady's faith in Baba was firmly fixed and as a token of her seve, she had the present Datta Mandir built at her expense. Baba installed Padukas in the temple on 15th January 1929. The Datta Murti that is now found in the temple was installed on 14th January 1943. A number of smaller shrines arose in the same compound for Ganapati, Mahadeo, Shani and Khandoba.

The pressing need for greater accommodation at Baba's new Zopadi gave rise to a pandal erected in front of the Zopadi, which was later replaced (1932) by the magnificient Zopadi Hall and Sabha Mantap as we now find them. The small Yagna Mantap of the earlier years is now replaced by a splendid permanent structure (1938). Several rooms and halls were subsequently added to accommodate the Kanyas who form a special section of Baba's devotees, and the whole area goes by the name of "Shree Upasani Kanya Kumari Sthan". A few devotees have, with Baba's permission, built a number of habitations for their personal use and the whole colony now presents the appearance of a small decent modern town and is usually termed Upasaninagar or Upasanisthan. What a contrast between the original dreary, desolate and awe-inspiring cremation ground and the present flourishing lively colony! Here indeed is the Hand of the Almighty at work.

CHAPTER II

THE PINJRA AND DISCOURSES

"Within this Cage of Flesh is confined the Eternal Lord."

On the evening of 25th December 1921, when the devotees had gone to take Darshana of Baba in his Zopadi, as had been their wont, they were shocked to find that he had confined himself in a Pinjra (Cage) fitted with bamboos about four inches apart and reaching upto the roof. The cage was closed on all sides and measured $3\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ cubits. A few days before, Baba had secretly instructed a carpenter, Pandoba by name, to prepare the said cage and bring it in when none was present. The carpenter implicitly followed orders and the cage was brought in unobserved on that evening. Baba got in and it was closed all round. The devotees began to weep and wail when they found Baba in self-confinment. They implored him for an explanation and begged him to come out. Baba said: "It is the Will of Providence that for your sake I have to confine myself. Lord Shree Krishna put himself in prison even prior to His birth, so that He might liberate thousands that were his devotees in later years. In ordinary legal transactions, a criminal can be released, if another stands surety for him. In like manner I stand surety for all my devotees in the Divine Court. This pinjra is the place for throwing off all your sins. I have invoked herein all saints that have so far lived and worked for the welfare of the world, as also the Satis, Sadhvis and Pativratas. Here have been invoked all the gods and goddesses, the founders of all faiths, Mahomed, Christ, Zoroaster etc. Sai Baba is here and I am for ever here in a subtle form, whether physically existent or not. Whosoever takes Darshana of this Pinjra takes Darsana of all these, and his sins will automatically be washed off. This Pinjara is the very ocean of Bliss and whoso dies thinking of it will, without doubt, attain the state of lasting bliss." However encouraging and elevating this discourse of Baba might have been, it failed to clear away the clouds of sorrow and depression that weighed upon the hearts of his devotees. In their dejection, they thought of several plans for drawing Baba out of the cage.

Sonabai, daughter of Bhausaheb Singvekar of Kharagpur, who was firmly devoted to Baba, pleaded in vain with him; and when she saw that no amount of argument, persuasion or imploration would avail, she gathered round her a number of ladies and started Namasaptaha for a week. By Baba's direction, the Saptah was started in the temple and went on week after week. The enthusiasm and energy of the ladies did not abate or diminish, so that they carried on the Saptah till Chaturmasya. Gentlemen felt ashamed of themselves for their inactivity and indifference, and thenceforward shared the Saptah with the ladies. It was so arranged that ladies should carry it on from midday to midnight and gentlemen from midnight to midday. This institution continues to this day in the form of Namasmarana to the accompaniment of Tal in Datta Mandir by hourly turns

Bapusaheb Jog who had performed Sai Baba's Arati till the latter's Mahasamadhi was desirous of carrying on similar worship of Upasani Baba who was the living embodiment of Shree Sai, but Baba persistently refused to accept Puja. He insisted on his devotees being satisfied with Puja and Arati in the temple. "I can never stand comparison with Sai Baba" he observed. "He is as high as the sky and I am as low as the earth." When Baba got into the cage, Bapusaheb wanted to make capital use of this opportunity and start his Arati. Baba must now either yield to the desire of the devotees or must come out of the Pinjra, if he wanted to chastise them. Either way, a useful purpose would be served. So, one fine morning, Bapusaheb approached Baba for permission to start his Arati. Baba tried to evade the issue, but Bapusaheb was determined. He was, however, asked to wait till Sankranti which was only a few days ahead. From Sankranti Bapusaheb did proceed with Baba's Puja and Arati in front of the Pinjra after the usual worship in the temple, and this practice continues to this day. Whether Baba liked it or not, he was obliged to allow it.

During this year (1924), there was an Adhika-Masa (an extra month in the lunar calendar) and at that time Brahmins started uninterrupted Abhisheka on the Padukas in the temple. This continuous Abhisheka for all the 24 hours of the day went on till 1941 when Baba put a stop to it.

Among the lady devotees who were staying at this time at Sakuri, there were two who could sing well. After Baba's Arati at the Pinjra, the ladies used to sing a few religious songs by way of Seva of God. Others soon joined them and they would sing songs to the accompaniment of a harmonium, presented by a devotee. A Parsi lady interested in music and trained on modern lines introduced the practice of singing and playing the Tipri (known as

Kolatam in the Madras province). In course of time, it formed a regular part of the Arati ceremony and continues to this day. As a rule, we have two songs in the afternoon and one at night; the songs being of a religious and devotional character.

During Sai Baba's life-time, Bapusaheb was directed to make Anushthan of Eknath-Bhagwat and this he continued uninterrupted at Sakuri. He used to read the scripture in the temple in the evening and when they went to Baba at his Zopadi after night Arati, Baba would discourse casually on the very subject read out in the temple; or it sometimes happened that he would explain portions which were to be read the next day. Devotees were surprised at it and they could not call it mere chance or coincidence, for coincidences do not happen every day. The clear elucidation of many difficult points encountered in the text which could not easily be grasped by Bapusaheb and his listeners, try however hard they might, was child's play as it were to Baba, whose experience and insight were far greater and deeper than the erudition of his devotees. During the period of his confinement in the Pinjra, and sometimes later also (for about three years), Baba was continuously pouring forth his unpremeditated eloquence on a variety of subjects,—social, political, religious and philosophical. He would start of at about 9 or 10 A.M., when the devotees used to come for Darshana, and go on till 2 or 3 P.M. without a break and ever kept his audience spell-bound. If he began at night, he would talk on till morning. One Mr. Ranga Rao, a Vakil from Hyderabad, (popularly known as Vakil Mama) used to take down in Modi script Baba's discourses as they came out of his mouth. He was a fast writer and did full justice to his work. His script was then translated into Nagari (Balbodh), and the discourses during this period were collected and published in five volumes. As it is believed that the discourses were due to the inspiration of Sai Baba, they were termed "Sai Vak-Sudha". These discourses were in easy and colloquial Marathi. and as they were the spontaneous ebullitions prompted by an individual or an object or any casual remark from any quarter, they form a miscellaneous collection with no order or arrangement. A sort of classification and arrangement was later on attempted and these volumes reappeared in five volumes, entitled "Upasani Vak-Sudha."

On the evening of 31st January 1924, Baba called on carpenter Pandoba and directed him to make a doorway in the northeast corner of the Pinjra. When the devotees came to pay their respects to him, they found him, to their great joy and surprice, seated outside the Pinjra and leaning against it. As he was confined for so long within such narrow limits, the devotes naturally felt that his limbs must have become stiff and rigid and they at once fell to massaging them by way of Seva. In a few days Baba was able to move about freely. He used to take occasional short walks and go in and come out of the Pinjra at will. When he was within, he would lock himself up and deposit the key with Vakil Mama. In course of time, the bamboos of the Pinjra became worm-eaten, but Baba would not allow them to be removed or re-placed. When in 1928 Baba had fallen seriously ill and was taken to Nasik for a change, devotees replaced the bamboos of the Pinjra with silver bars and made the cage a strong and permanent structure. When Baba returned from Nasik, he was wild with those responsible for this change, for their unauthorised meddling with his Pinjra, and insisted upon the bamboos being refitted. As a conciliatory measure, a few of the old bamboos were then fitted behind the front row of the silver bars.

On 24th August 1924, Maharaja Sir Kishan Prasad Bahadur, Dewan of Hyderabad, paid a visit to Baba with his whole family and a large retinue of about three hundred men. He was a great devotee of Baba and continued so to the last. Ever and anon he was visiting Baba at Sakuri, failing which he would send some one to perform Puja on his behalf on important festivals. At the request of the devotees there, Baba went to Hyderabad in 1926. He put up in a Government bungalow at Begumpet, where thousands used to gather round him for Darshana and spiritual comfort. Here Baba delivered a series of addresses in Hindi which have been collected and published under the title of 'Upasani Gita'.

After a couple of months' stay at Begumpet, Baba moved on to Keshavgiri, where one of his great devotees, Raja Narsing Raj Bahadur, had a bungalow. This place was away from the bustle and din of the city, and it was a welcome change for Baba. It was at this time that Raja Narsing Raj Bahadur desired that a Saptah should be celebrated here in Baba's holy presence. Brahmin feeding and poor feeding form an important and essential part of all such religious functions. A serious difficulty that troubled his mind, however, was the great scarcity of water, as the well in the compound was almost dry. Nevertheless

Baba assured him that there was no cause for anxiety and all would be well. That very night quite unexpectedly there was a continuous and heavy downpour of rain so that the next morning the well was full to overflowing. The devotees were naturally overjoyed but another disconcerting factor was that the water was too muddy to be serviceable for cooking and drinking purposes. When this disquieting news reached Baba's ears, he coolly walked up to the well and sat on its brink for a few minutes with his legs dangling into the water, and lo! the water became sufficiently clear to be serviceable during the Saptah. Wonderous indeed are the ways of Sat-purushas and their powers over nature! The devotees sang the praises of Baba and amidst great rejoicing the function came to a close.

In later years, Baba discoursed occasionally on religious subjects, but the foremost subject that engaged his attention was that of woman, her place in society, her education and her fitness, if and when properly used, to serve as the best medium for the liberation of several souls. A systematic treatment of this subject has been furnished in the latest of his publications entitled "Sati Charitra". Some other miscellaneous discourses appeared under the name of "Goodha Ghoshti".

Baba's discourses deal, as has already been pointed out, with a variety of subjects, social, political, ethical, religious and philosophical. In some of them, we find many of the Hindu customs and practices, apparently superstitious and meaninglses to the modern educated mind, explained on a spiritual basis and their true import brought home with a flash. In some he has explained the proper relations that should subsist between the ruler and the ruled so as to be conducive to the harmony and well-being of both, and the ways and means of reforming a country, with special reference to the conditions prevailing in India. In others, he has tackled the problems of sin and virtue, of happiness and misery as they are and should be interpreted; the factors conducive to permanent or lasting bliss, etc.; while in yet others he has solved for us the recondite philosophic problems of God and Maya, the Individual and the Universal Soul, the relation existing between God, Jiva and the World, the functions of a God-man, etc. Thus from the simplest lessons of social customs, traditions and superstitions, he leads us through the labyrinthine mazes of elaborate religious rites and ceremonies to the transcendental heights of Advaitism with an ease, clarity and vividness which surpass the comprehension of the human understanding and which the highest spiritual experience and insight alone are capable of revealing. The language of the discourses is easy, colloquial Marathi which an average intelligent reader can grasp without much difficulty. The discourses are here and there illumined by flashes of wit and humour of which Baba possesses a fairly good stock, and which relieves us from the intellectual tension of the more serious subjects on the one hand and from a feeling of tiresomeness due to frequent repetitions on the other.

CHAPTER III

BABA'S MISSION AND METHODS.

The mission of all perfect saints and sages that have been or will be is to work for the welfare of the world, by which is meant not the bestowing of material benefits but the spirtual welfare of the individual souls that-come into contact with them. Whether they avow it or not in so many words, the work of saints or God-men is, to put it in a nutshell, the saving of souls or absorbing them into the Source whence they have sprung, putting an end to Samsara or the cycle of births and deaths. This in popular language is termed salvation, liberation, redemption, God-realisation or Self-realisation. Several kinds of liberation or Mukti have been talked of in the scriptures but for our practical purposes, we confine our attention to two different states of attainment.

“ इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः

‘Rebirth is conquered by them even here on earth whose mind is in a state of perfect equilibrium’.

This is Jivan Mukti or Liberation while yet in this body. This is the state of perfect sages or Siddha Purushas, Dnyanis or God-men whose ego has completely died out, who have nothing to do or gain for themselves and who live merely as instruments of God for working out the welfare of the Universe. This state can be attained only by a privileged few who, by dint of a great amount of Punya Karma either in their past or present life, have completely rooted out all desire and annihilated self. The second state is what is called ‘Videha Mukti’ liberation or absorption into the source after the fall of the body. In this case, however, the ineffable bliss of the Divine State is not actually experienced in this body.

In the spiritual as in the material world, one attains in the measure of one’s adhikara (fitness), adhikara being constituted by one's effort. Baba used to say: "Those of my devotees who have sufficient stock of merit and stick to me to the last will taste of the bliss of salvation in this very life–one year, six months, one month, four days or even just before expiry. My devotees will not be obliged to take more than three or four births at the most before they attain salvation, even if they happen to be the worst of sinners." Saints are never anxious for results. Their purpose is not to manufacture Jivan Muktas but to redeem as many souls as possible by absorbing them into themselves. Their main work, as Swami Rama Tirtha puts it, is 'the sowing of seeds'. As soon as a worldly soul comes in to contact with a God–man, his mind which has so far been wandering away from the source is switched on towards the source. It is a mistake to suppose that the work of saints is to confer worldly benefits upon their devotees. Time and again Baba has said that perfect saints never indulge in miracle–mongering. It does not follow from this that worldly benefits never result from the service of a saint, but it is only as a bye-product. The so-called occult powers or Siddhis dance attendance upon a perfect God-man, but he never makes use of them on his own initiative. They automatically function as a result of the devotee's intensity of faith and stock of Punya, and these miracles are generally fathered upon the saint. Punya Karma done anywhere and at any time yields its good fruit, but in the presence of a saint the time of fruition is shortened. 'The real work of a saint', says Baba, 'begins at the time of the devotees leaving this world'. We have it in the Gita,

" यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेबरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥"

"What so ever a man thinks of at the time of leaving his body, he will attain that as his mind has been rivetted upon it". In accordance with this principle, the last thought of an individual determines his next brith, and his strongest thought will be his last. Therefore Lord Shree Krishna has exhorted Arjuna: 'Constantly remember me and fight, so that even if you fall, you will come to me as you die thinking of me'.

" अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्व कलेबरम् ।
यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥

'He who dies thinking of me doubtless comes to me'. Baba's method of absorbing his devotees is just this. 'Remember me, take me in' are some of his oft-repeated directions to his devotees. "Whosoever dies thinking of me, my piece of gunny bag, my Pinjra, or for the matter of that any thing pertaining to me or my Sthan at Sakuri, is sure to come to me", he had often emphatically declared. The working scheme of his Sthan at Sakuri is so laid out that from the time one gets up from bed till he goes to bed again, one has constantly to remember and take the name of God or the Sadguru, so that the incessant remembrance fixes this mental habit and makes it the foremost thought at the time of death. Baba lays greater stress on physical and vocal Seva than on mental Sadhana. The mind is so subtle and fickle that it is not within easy reach of all to concentrate it on God. As it has got to function through the voice and the body, if the latter two are incessantly dedicated to the service of God, the mind shall have to come to rest in course of time, as it has no way of escape. This is by far easier and has the sanction of the Lord.

" मदर्थमापि कर्माणी कुर्वन् सिद्धिमवाप्स्यासि ॥

'Thou attainest salvation (siddhi) by working for me'.

The experiences of Baba's devotees have, beyond the possibility of doubt, established the varacity of the above statements. Those of them that died at Sakuri expired either in Baba's immediate presence, or taking his name, and feeling his presence actually before them, though he was physically absent and not perceived by others. The case of Bala Bhavu (the hotel-keeper at Shirdi) is an instance of this kind. Two or three days before he passed away, he used to feel Baba's presence and was calling upon the members of his family to raise him from the bed that he might take Darshana of Baba. As the others could not see Baba, they were thinking that he might be delirious, but he rebuked them saying that they were blind in spite of their having eyes. They could at last understand that as Bala Bhavu was a fervent devotee of Baba, Baba must be giving him Darshana at the last moment so as to absorb him into himself.

One noteworthy feature in connection with those devotees who had died at Sakuri was that the agonies of death, distortion of features and above all rigor-mortis which usually sets in very soon after death were conspicuously absent in most cases. They died calm and unperturbed, taking the name of God or Baba, and in case they were too weak to do so, they requested others to do it for them so that they might pass away hearing the holy name. The instances of Mira and Sonabai, the oldest of Baba's Kharagpur devotees, may be here cited. The latter had, like

Dasopant Khasnis, a glimpse of the future; for, four days prior to her death she desired that a continuous stream of milk should be kept pouring on Baba's padukas in the temple in the form of Akhanda Abhisheka for four days, and on the last day she expired. Baba gave Mira and Soni burial with his own hands, a mark of no small favour from the Sadguru. Bapusaheb Jog had been suffering from indigestion for some time, and a few months before he expired, he had stopped taking food altogether. He was kept only on hot water, and grew weaker day by day. In November 1926, Baba who foresaw his end advised him to renounce the world and have recourse to the Fourth Ashram (Atura Sanyasa). On 22nd December 1926 Bapusaheb became one with Sai Baba in the presence of his living personification, Upasani Baba. He was duly given Samadhi as befitting his status, and his Samadhi is honoured and worshipped to this day. Examples without number may be cited, but suffice it to say that many Baba's Kharagpur devotees like Guard of Mama and his wife, Bhau Saheb Singevekar, and Shirdi friends like Guruji had all passed away in the presence of Baba and attained liberation. Similar experiences have been recorded of devotees who died elsewhere.

A small group of children who received special attention from Baba needs to be mentioned here. Children are generally in a state approximating to the divine and hence it is said: "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven". One Mr. P. M. Dixit of Bombay had a son. From childhood the boy was in a state bordering upon insanity. At the age of about nine or ten, he was accidentally drowned at Sakuri in a small pool of water. At that time, the Datta Mandir was under construction. Baba who knew the spiritual status of the boy buried him in the foundation of the temple. Dattu, brother of Sati Godavari Mata, passed away at Sakuri at the age of five. Even at such a very early age, he evinced great interest in Puja, Bhajan etc., and gave proofs of a highly devotional soul. Baba gave him Samadhi with his own hands, a few yards away from where the present Yagna Mantap stands. A few months before Baba's Mahasamadhi, one Narhari Dattu, (aged about seven) son of a Vakil from Guntur, expired at Sakuri. The boy was precocious and was a hot favourite with everyone, Baba and Godavari Mata inclusive. He died of typhoid and Baba interred him with his own hands within the holy precincts of his Zopadi.

Another unique aspect of Baba's abounding love for humanity and his compassion for the wretched and miserable is evidenced by the fact that those afflicted with dreadful diseases like leprosy, (whom the whole world shuns) find refuge in him and obtain shelter and solace in his Sthan. Mention may be made of three lepers—Shantaram, Vasant and Tiwari, who stayed here and attained liberation. In connection with the last of these, an interesting anecdote is related which goes to show that in the case of those who have to be absorbed into the Supreme Source at the end of this life, Baba sees to it that their worldly desires, if any, are fulfilled before their expiry so as to leave them in a state of desirelessness and be thus qualified for salvation. It seems that a few hours before his end, Tiwari was wishing to have a dish of Puri and Potato Curry. Just at this time, Baba was asking the Kanyas in the Zopadi to prepare and serve him with that very dish, though it was late at night and it was unusual for Baba to eat at that late hour. Another interesting anecdote of Mr. Sorabji Desai, a Parsi devotee from Navsari, bears testimony to this practice of Baba. This Parsi gentleman was bedridden and a few days before his death, he could not have Darshana of the Sun and repeat his special prayers to the Sun-God, as enjoined by his religion. His last words were "I have not seen Suryanarayana, I have not seen Suryanarayana". A few months later, Baba had been to Navsari and was invited to this gentleman's house by his relatives. Baba paced to and fro in the room in which his devotee had expired and then coming out on to the verandah, looked at the Sun and exclaimed: "I have seen Suryanarayana. Now I have seen Suryanarayana". These words, apparently incoherent and meaningless as they are, are in fact an echo of the dead man's regret that he could not have Darshana of Surya–narayana.

A telling incident may here be narrated to show that Baba's care is not confined merely to the group of his devotees but extends to their kith and kin as well. It also serves to confirm Baba's oft-repeated statement that through a single individual he would draw into his circle all his near and dear ones. Mr. Amrit Rao of Dhulia is a very old devotee of Baba but his father had no faith in Baba. At best he was indifferent and never worried about visiting Baba or Sakuri. At the time of his death, however, he called his son to him and pointing into the vacant space in front observed: 'Look at that man. He seems to be from Sakuri'. When the son came to Sakuri to perform the last rites of his father as is usual with all devotees of

Baba, Baba said: 'I have done what is needful for your father. You discharge your duty of a son to him as prescribed by the scriptures'.

The grace of a God-man and his power to liberate souls is not confined only to the human kingdom. Baba has often declared that a perfect saint is authorised to redeem the soul of any creature that dies within his life time With regard to those who survive him, they have to tread the path chalked out by their Karma, even if they happen to be closely related to the Saint, the wife and children alone being excepted. Baba would frequently say: "Sai Baba has so ordained everything that, as soon as the news of any one's demise reaches my ears, the steering wheel is immediately set in motion without any effort on my part, and the whole spiritual machinery necessary to attract and bring that particular soul to me is automatically released. Even if it be a dog that dies, let me but hear of it and I shall give it Sadgati". At Kharagpur Baba would frequently betake himself to the place where bones were stocked for export and sit upon those bones so that by his purifying touch, he might redeem the souls of those dead animals. After his settlement at Sakuri, there were instances of a few birds and animals that came into contact with him and attained liberation. A parrot that came into the temple was kept in a cage for sometime. It was quite normal at first, but one day it suddenly stopped taking food. A little later, it stopped drinkink water too and Baba said it was doing penance. In a few days it died and was buried where the temple of Shani now stands. When Baba had confined himself in the Pinjra, a crow used to get in and perch upon his body. Baba never drove it away and it was observed that the crow was uttering "Rama Rama", more clearly and distinctly than a parrot. Baba remarked that it was a great soul that had come for its liberation to him and as it went on uttering the name of Rama, it would become one with Rama. The crow came into the Pinjra a few days before Rama Navami, and late in the evening of Shree Rama's birthday it dropped down dead in front of the Pinjra. It was given burial in accordance with Baba's direction.

Mr. Yeshwant Rao Boravke had one night seen in a vision Baba getting upon his horse back and riding upon it to Kopargaon. Thereupon he thought that the horse on which Baba was seated should not be used by him any more, and so he made a gift of it to Baba. Pandoba used to dress it up and march it in at the time of Arati. It suddenly died one night. Baba had it buried in the place where now the Khandoba temple stands. A second horse was presented to Baba later on. It fell ill when Baba had been to Hyderabad but would not die. It kept on turning its head in all directions, as though expecting to see some one. Baba arrived one fine morning from Hyderabad, and as soon as he heard of the condition of the horse, he hurried up to it and put Tirtha (holy water) in its mouth. In an instant, the horse expired and was duly buried Mysterious are the ways of Providence and equally mysterious and miraculous are the ways of the Sadguru whose love and compassion extend equally to all creatures, high or low.

CHAPTER IV

THE KANYA KUMARI STHAN AND ITS WORKING.

Baba's chief method for mass-redemption however is, after the example of Lord Shree Krishna, through the medium of the Kanya. The practice of dedicating girls to the service of God is not in any way special to India and Hinduism alone. In ancient Greece, virgins were offered to Diana-the Moon-Goddess—and they were bound to a life of celibacy. In ancient Rome again, maidens were offered to the Goddess Vesta, and their duty was to keep continually feeding the fire on the altar of the Goddess. The mediaeval and modern Christian Institution of Nuns is a similar practice. In none of these cases, however, does the object of such a dedication extend beyond the saving of the individual soul. In India on the contrary, the Kanya has been found to be and used as the fittest and best medium for the saving of a number of souls. With this end in view, girls have been from times immemorial offered in Kanyadan either to God or one in the godly state; and for this very reason it is laid down in the Shastras that a girl should be offered in Kanyadan to one in Parabrahma state. This is what constitutes marriage according to the system of Brahma-Vivaha, and it is this kind of marriage that the Rishis had advocated and resorted to in ancient times.

The spiritual basis of this kind of Kanyadan has been outlined by Baba thus. "The world is the manifestation of Satchidananda Paramatma through His Prakriti, composed of three Gunas-Satva, Rajas and Tamas. In the course of evolution, the Lord has finally come down to the human form, the female form being His final descent through Vidya or Satvic

Prakriti, and the male form through Avidya or Rajasic and Tamasic Prakriti. Man, in whom the ego of the doer ठुकर्तृत्वाभिमान prevails owing to the predominance of Rajas and Tamas, is mainly meant for carrying on the work of the world, and woman, in wohm Satvaguna predominates, for destroying the evil effects of man's worldly activities and leading him back to the Source. The inherent Satvaguna in a virgin, which is otherwise latent, is roused and made available for the saving of souls by close and permanent association with the Parabrahma Shakti fully manifest in a God-man (Satpurusha). Once intimate union is firmly established, the Kanya becomes capable of saving not only all her ancestors as has been held out in the Kanyadan Sankalpa, but all those worldly souls who look upon her with reverence and devotion and whom she has come to regard as her own."

It is for this sacred purpose that Shree Upasani Maharaj closely followed the footsteps of Lord Shree Krishna and accepted as his 'Dharma Patnis' several Kanyas and made them the instruments for the working out of the Divine Scheme. Marriage here therefore symbolises a spiritual union of the Individual Soul with the universal Soul, paving thereby the way for the liberation of innumerable other souls. For fuller details on the subject, the reader's attenion is invited to Baba's treatise entitled 'Sati Charitra or Kanya Kumari Mahima' in Marathi, or the Secret of God Realisation' in English.

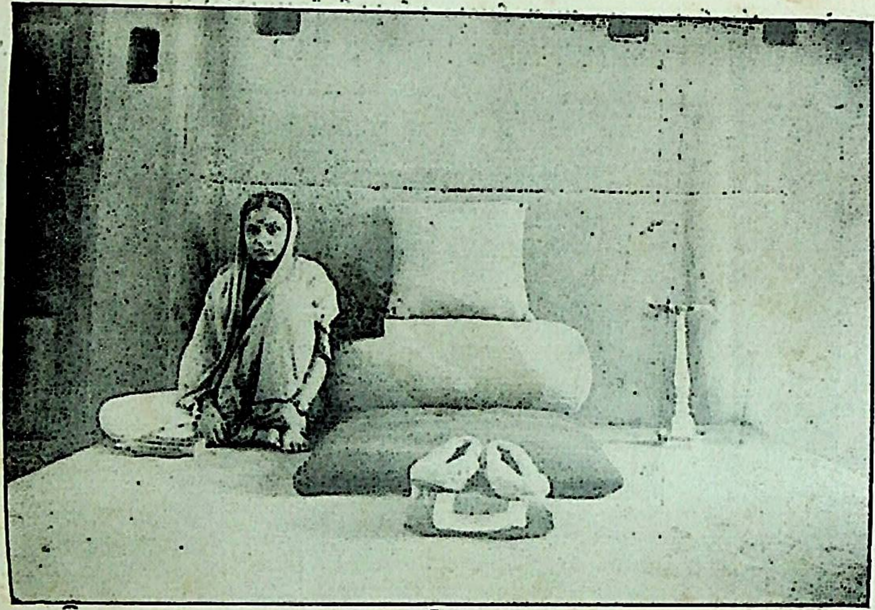
To resume the thread of our narrative, Baba fell seriously ill early in 1928 and was removed to Nasik for treatment. His health steadily declined and his life was despaired of. According to doctor's advice, no one was allowed to see him except after obtaining special permission. In this state of health, he was interviewed by one Mr. Vishnupant from Bombay. Baba enquired after the welfare of his family and relations, but instead of replying to Baba's querries, he went on with a doleful story of how the wife of one of his relatives died and occasioned his visit to Nasik. He was in a very pensive state of mind, philosophised on the transitory nature of all sublunar things and the vanity of earthly pomp and human wishes; regretted his having married at all and desired to gift away his wife Godavaribai to Baba. This lady was at that time with Baba at Nasik. Ever since her marriage which took place at Sakuri, (1925) her husband left her in the service of Baba and she had now come over to Nasik with him along with another girl, Prema, Saraswatibai of Hyderabad and one or two other ladies. The spirit of renunciation had for the time being taken such possession of Mr. Vishnupant that after consulting his wife who was as averse to a worldly life as himself, he resolved to offer her as a gift to Baba. He removed from the lady her Mangala Sutra (the holy bond of wedlock) and offered it away to Baba saying that she was no more his wife. Thenceforward she was a mother to him, in token of which new relationship, he prostrated himself at her feet. The few devotees of Baba that were present on the occasion viz. Raja Narasing Raj Bahadur of Hyderabad, Seth Govinddas of Bombay, Yeshwantrao Boravke etc. were amazed at and applauded the young man's Vairagya (detachment from worldly enjoyment) at such an early age. It is difficult to say how it impressed Baba who told Mr. Vishnupant that he was not competent enough to award him the full fruit of his Punya Karma. He was therefore directed to offer his wife to Triambakeshwar, one of the twelve Jyotirlingas in India, (about 20 miles from Nasik) and then leave her with Baba. Accordingly the young man set out with the lady and a few of Baba's devotees to Triambakeshwar and there offered her together with her symbols of wedlock to Lord Triambakeshwar. Leaving her at Nasik, he returned to Bombay.

Baba's condition grew worse day by day and even the doctor was not hopeful. His tongue grew black and death seemed imminent. At this critical juncture, in a voice hollow as death, Baba asked Saraswatibai (usually known as Jiji) to get for him some gruel (Kanheri) and ginger and salt pounded together. After a few occasional sips, Baba's condition took a hopeful turn. On Ramanavami day he was removed to Deolali as had been arranged by a Parsi devotee of Bombay who had a bungalow of his own at that place. Seth Govinddas put his car and driver at Baba's service and after a few days' stay at Deolali Baba gradually improved.

When Baba was in this precarious state of health, the little girl Prema (about 11 years old) who was very precocious and was fervently devoted to Baba, had a vision in which she was told that if she was duly offered in Kanyadan to Baba, his life would be spared. She immediately worte to her parents at Bombay and Mr. Sundar Rao Varde, her father, who was also greatly devoted to Baba, hastened to Nasik where he offered Prema in Kanyadan to Baba in due form. Both Godavari and Prema used to comfort and encourage Baba saying that their innocence and selfless devotion and the fact that they had been wholly entrusted and made over to him would induce God to have compassion for them and bring about his speedy recovery. And indeed it so happened that Baba gradually became convalescent and went over to Triambakeshwar in May. His birthday was celebrated there by the devotees amidst great rejoicing; for to them Baba had actually been reborn after his recent illness. After a couple of months' stay at Triambakeshwar and a short sojourn at Bombay, Baba returned to Sakuri two days before Gurupoornima.

Before proceeding further, it is worthwhile and necessary to give a brief sketch of the life of Sati Godavaribai who is to figure prominently in the years that follow and who has succeeded Baba as the Spiritual Head or Guru. Her grandfather Mr. Bhasker Rao belonged to a place called Shegaon in Berar, a place specially noteworthy because one Shree Gajanan Maharaj, a perfect God-man and a friend of Sai Baba, lived and took Samadhi there. This Bhasker Rao was an ardent devotee of Gajanan Maharaj, who, at the time of leaving his body, intimated to him that he would take birth in the latter's family and be the saviour of his whole race. A few months after Gajanan Maharaj left this world, Mr. Bhasker Rao's son Vasudeo Rao was blessed with a daughter (24th December

SHRI BABA IN FEMALE ATTIRE,
(*Performing yadnya along with the Kanyas*).



SHRI SATI GODAVARI MATA,
(*At the Jhopadi under the Mango creeper*).

1914). By certain unmistakable omens and indications, it was believed that Gajanan Maharaj had come down in the form of this girl and as the former was in the habit of incessantly repeating the name of Ganga Godavari, the infant was named Godavari. When she was of the age of five, her parents went to live at Nagpur where at that time there were two famous saints— Tajudin Baba and Sai Moula. Being religiously inclined, the parents used to go to them for Darshana taking their children with them. On one occasion, when the little girl Godavari went to pay her homage to Tajudin Baba, he gave her a vigorous pat on the head. She also had Darashana of Sai Moula when a noteworthy incident took place. When she offered a cocoanut and flowers, the Saint took out a garland from his own neck and put it round Godavari's saying that her marriage would take place at an early age but she was not destined for a family life; she would come in contact with a great Saint by whose Grace she would become a perfect Yogini and the saviour of thousands of souls. When she was nine, her parents came with her to Sakuri to pay their respects to Upasani Baba. One morning Godavari at the time of darshana walked up to him and sat in his lap. Baba was seated outside the Pinjra and some one had just finished his Pooja, putting a garland round his neck. Baba took it off and put it round hers. Pointing to her, he remarked that in future she would be the mistress of everything there. Next year she was married in Baba's very presence to Mr. Vishnupant who immediately left for Bombay. From that time she stayed at Sakuri in Baba's Seva and accompanied him to Nasik where the dramatic appearance of her husband and his gifting her away to Baba has already been narrated.

Gurupoornima this year was celebrated on a grander scale than usual and thousands gathered at Sakuri to have Darashana of Baba after his illness. The function was rendered all the more prominent and significant by the fact that on that day (28-7-1928) Baba took Sati Godavari and Sati Prema into the Pinjra. At the time of Arati Baba was as usual garlanded with the rosary of Rudraksha which had been given to Bapu Saheb by Sai Baba the day previous to his Mahasamadi. This rosary Bapu Saheb was putting round Sai Baba's neck at the time of Arati and when he left Shirdi, Bapu Saheb had brought it with him to Sakuri along with a Chilam (smoking pipe) and Sota (a short stick) belonging to Sai Baba. (The latter two are preserved in the inner sanctuary of the Datta Mandir.) Bapu Saheb was in the habit of putting this rosary round Upasani Baba's neck at the time of Arati. On this particular day, Baba removed it from his neck and put it round that of Sati Godavari, gave her Mantra Diksha and spoke briefly about her future greatness. The devotees thereupon could understand that Sati Godavari was the DISCIPLE of Baba and would succeed him as the Spiritual Head or Sadguru. After some time her Arati was composed and recited along with Baba's.

In course of time three more girls were offered to Baba in Kanyadan. One was Bhima, the daughter of Tatya Mule of Satana, a boyhood friend of Baba, who for several years officiated as a purohit (priest) at Sakuri. The second was Kamala, sister of Sati Godavari. The third was Rama, the daughter of one Mr. Damle, a retired school master. Three of her eldest sisters had died on account of the influence of evil spirits. The father believed that by dedicating this girl to God she might be saved from falling a victim to the same fate. She was brought over to Sakuri and put in Baba's Seva. At this time, Baba left for Hyderabad and in his absence the girl manifested symptoms of the same malady as had carried off her sisters. When Baba returned, he gave her holy water and she recovered. These three girls together with Sati Godavari and Sati Prema formed the first batch of five girls or 'Panch Kanyas' offered to Baba, and in 1932 they were united to Shree Krishna on the Tulsi Vivaha day. A couple of years later, however, Prema and Rama left Sakuri and took to a worldly life which, it is regretable to note, did not turn out to be happy in either case. Within a few years of their leaving Sakuri, Rama died a miserable death and Prema was left a widow with an orphan boy to take care of.

In 1935, two more girls were offered in Kanyadan to Baba; one was Gangu of Alandi and the other Kusum, the youngest sister of Sati Godavaribai. Thereupon a false and fictitious complaint was brought against Baba under the Devdasi Act. Though the girls had been actually married to Baba, it was alleged that they were married to an idol of Shri Krishna, the main object of those responsible for the charge being to harass and persecute Baba and cast a slur on his fair name. The sentence of a fine of Rs. 100 passed by the Magistrate, Ahmednagar, was set aside on appeal by the Sessions Judge who passed severe strictures on, and held the judgment of the Lower Court erroneous and untenable.

Today there are twenty-four Kanyas who have closely and permanently associated themselves with God through the medium of their Sadguru for the liberation of themselves and their ancestors. These Kanyas are the chosen instruments of Baba first for the redemption of innumerable souls and secondly for the regeneration and handing down to posterity of the ancient Vedic Dharma and Stree Dharma of the Hindus which are now in a state of decay and confusion. In Baba's own words "The main object of this Sthan is to check the present demoralised state of society and bring it back to the ancient path of righteousness. It seems to be the Will of Providence that the work of regeneration should be carried on through me; and as such, all forces conducive to it should gather here. The Kanyas thus happen to be the chosen instruments of the Lord for the fulfilment of this Divine Mission. Therefore from the very beginning Kanyas have been drawn here in large numbers. All facilities congenial to their development and progress are automatically provided for. As this Sthan is intended for the Kanya Kumaris, it is termed "The Kanya Kumari Sthan". This is a religious institution, a household for the Kanyas to live in and carry on their religious and spiritual activities". This Sthan is, as it were, a

Dynamo or Spiritual Power House where the current of Punya is generated; and all those who have the inclination or intelligence to avail themselves of it and derive the full benefit thereof have only to maintain their intimate and unbroken connection with this Sthan. The Kanyas are instruments of the Lord to carry on Satkarmas as has been laid down in the Shastras and advocated by Baba, and thus form the medium for the production and distribution of Punya which is the source of all happiness—spiritual or temporal. Whether or not women are authorised by the Shastras to carry on Vedic Satkarmas need not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that Baba has authorised his Kanyas on his personal responsibility as a Sadguru to discharge all the Vedic rites and ceremonies in due form. At the time of accepting these girls, certain Kriyas which have been handed down through the successive generations of Sadgurus are performed, whereby the Kanyas become eligible to recite Veda Mantras and discharge Vedic rites and ceremonies.

The working of the Sthan is based upon the Vedic Dharma as expounded by Lord Shri Krishna in the Bhagwat Gita. As Punya Karmas (righteous deeds) constitute the seed of happiness, temporal or spiritual, it forms the ground-work of this institution. This entire universe is the outcome of Maya and no creature in it, human or divine, is free from the three Gunas of which Prakriti is composed. These Gunas are in a state of ceaseless activity,

"कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः"

and hence the whole world is bound up by Karma लोकोऽयं कर्मबंधनः and no individual therein can afford to be free from it either.

"नहि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्।"

What has therefore got to be done is to carry on Karma but not to be bound by it. It is for this purpose that all Karma should be performed as an offering to God.

"यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥"

Again Karma performed for and in the name of God or a Satpurusha does not bind down the soul to this world but helps to liberate it.

"मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन्सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि।"

The daily routine of work of this Sthan consists entirely of this kind of Karma, performed in a spirit of renunciation. All the Hindu gods and goddesses are duly worshipped without any leaning towards sectarianism, but with the firm conviction that they all emanate from ONE, that they are all different manifestations of their Sadguru who is himself Parabrahma.

The Sadguru thus serves to bring home the unity underlying the diversity. In short, the foundation of the Kanya Kumari Sthan is Punya Karma performed in the name of and as an offering to God or the Sadguru according to one's Swadharma; Bhakti for the Sadguru is its superstructure. Gnana forms its crowning dome. Followers of other faiths are not excluded from this place. On the other hand they are allowed—nay, enjoined—to carry on Satkarma according to their Swadharma and freely participate in all the activities of this place, the common platform for all being their devotion to their Sadguru and the knowledge of the ONENESS OF GOD in whatever form and by whatever name He may be worshipped.

The daily programme of work here is so laid out that, from the time one gets up from bed till one retires to it, one should, in some form or other, remember and take the name of God or the Sadguru. The day begins here at 3-45 A. M. (S. T.) when a general bell wakes up all the inmates. Afte attending to physical necessities and taking bath, they are expected to attend to Kakad (Morning) Arati, which according to the time of sunrise begins from about 4-30 to 5–30 A.M. The service is first performed in the temple and immediately after at Shri Baba's Samadhi. In all, it lasts for about an hour and a quarter, finishing by day-break. After a short interval, Brahmans sit in the temple for Abhisheka and Pooja, and others attend to other duties. The Pooja at Shri Baba's Samadhi is attended to by the Kanyas. From 9 to 10 A.M. men perform Bhajan in the entrance to the Zopadi and from 10 to 11 A.M. ladies carry on Bhajan in the Pinjra Hall. At 11 A. M. the mid–day service begins, first in the temple and then in the Zopadi and lasts till about 1 P.M. In the evening ladies do Bhajan from 6 to 7 P. M. in the entrance to the Zopadi. Evening Arati begins in the temple at about sunset and lasts for about 45 minutes, after which there is an interval. At about 8-30 P.M. a Dindi (Procession) starts from the temple and proceeds to the Zopadi where the night service takes about an hour. The day's programme comes to a close by about 10 P.M. In the temple, Namasmarana goes on with the accompaniment of Tal all the twenty–four hours by hourly turns, by men from midnight to midday and by ladies from midday to midnight. Every Thursday there is a special Bhajan lasting for one to one and a half hours in connection with the evening service in the temple when the Palkhi procession is taken round the temple thrice. Every Saturday Oil Abhisheka for Shanideva is carried on by Brahmins. On almost all important Hindu festivals, such as Ramanavami, Gurupoornima (about the middle of July), Ganesh Chaturthi, Dassara, Sankranti (about the middle of January) and Shivaratri, Havans are performed by the Kanyas in the Yadnya Mantap specially erected for the purpose. Of these, Gurupoornima and Sankranti have been held to be the most important and no devotee thinks of missing these two occasions, if he can help it. Shri Baba has specially trained his Kanyas in the chanting of the Veda Mantras and the performance of Vedic rites and ceremonies, a unique feature of this institution. Havans are likewise performed on special occasions like Shri Baba's mother's Anniversary (Vaishaka Amavasya usually towards the close of May), Shri Baba's Punya Tithi (Pausha Shukla Saptami late in December or early in January), Solar or Lunar Eclipses etc. The duration of the Havans varies with the occasion and lasts for three to fifteen days. On the last day of the Havans i.e., at the Poornahuti, two Poornahauti 'Patras' are got ready, one for the Kanyas and the other to be touched by all others present before its contents are offered in the fire, so that all may have the full benefit of the Punya Karma. The Poornahuti ceremony usually lasts for four to five hours when the Kanyas are seen at their best, chanting hymns from all the Vedas and the Upanishads. Havans are occasionally performed by Brahmins in the temple. On all such occasions general as well as special,—Namasmarana Saptahs are conducted both in the temple and in the Zopadi. Every Fullmoon and New Moon day. Satyanarayana Vratas are performed by the Kanyas in the Zopadi. Baba would occasionally direct his devotees to carry on Japa of Gayatri or some other Mantra and in the case of some of his advanced devotees, he prescribed special Sadhana like Japa, Mansik Pooja (Mental worship) and Dhyana to suit their particular needs and state of development.

From what has been said above, it is clear that:—

1. Baba attached great importance to—nay insisted upon Swadharma Acharana i.e., strictly carrying out the tenets of one's religion; and
2. He laid greater stress on physical and vocal Seva than on mental Sadhana.

CHAPTER V

BABA AND HIS DEVOTEES

All saints are essentially one in that 'Truth is One and the experience of Truth attained through a state of desirelessness and selflessness is One'; but the ways and means of their acting and reacting upon the world are different, as they are chiefly determined by the spiritual needs of the circle of devotees that gather round them. Hence it is that the methods and practical working of God-men are peculiar to themselves and distinct from those of others. The methods have, as everything else in nature has, the power of attracting some and repelling others, attraction and repulsion being the positive and negative aspects of one and the same natural force. A single phenomenon reacts differently on different individuals in accordance with their mental make-up. 'One man's food is another man's poison' is as true in the spiritual world as in the material. What appeals to one is revolting to another. This explains why several fall foul of a saint for the very reasons for which he is applauded by thousands. The praise or blame does not rest with the God–man but with the temperaments of those who come into contact with him. A God-man is for ever beyond the pale of the three Gunas ('Trigunateeta', i.e.. one on whom the three Gunas—Satva, Rajas and Tamas- fail to leave any impression). He is indifferent to the pairs of opposites—praise or blame, honour or dishonour flattery or censure-which pertain to Rajo Guna. He is ever beyond the plane of duality. Men go on imagining good or evil about him according to their own mental composition and reap the fruits thereof.

From the time of Baba's stay at Shirdi and Sai Baba's declaration that his full grace would be bestowed upon him, Baba had the sympathy, goodwill and devotion of a large number of Sai Baba's devotees on the one hand, and the jealousy and persecution of a small group on the other. For a spiritual aspirant, censure, blame, humiliation and persecution are necessary evils by facing which his powers of forbearance and fortitude are developed to the fullest extent, preparing his mind for receiving that final grace which brings his Sadhana to a close. Even after one becomes a spiritual adept, slander, calumny and vilification continue to dog his steps but their function now is to serve as a set-of to the brighter side of the saint's career and demonstrate at every step that he is a 'Gunateeta'. The earlier part of Baba's career at Shirdi and Kharagpur as a spiritual master or Sadguru bears unambiguous testimony to the same. Many of Sai Baba's devotees admired and adored Upasani Baba for his severe penance, disinterested service and the reception of Sai Baba's full grace—chief among them being Dr. Pillay of Nagpur; the Hon'ble Diwan Bahadur G. S. Khaparde of Amraoti, Rao Saheb Sathe of Poona and Amidas Mehta of Bombay. These continued their devotion to Baba even after Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi and whenever Baba visited any of their places, he was invariably taken to their houses and honoured and worshipped. Amidas Mehta took Baba to Bombay twice. After his settlement at Sakuri, many of these paid occasional visits to this place and as Baba's circle of devotees widened, his visits to distant places became more frequent. It is curious to note that some saints never stir from their place while others go out often and grace their devotees with their Darshana at their own place. Baba's jurisdiction was very large and extended from Bombay and Poona to Surat and Ahmedabad on the West, to Sholapur and Hyderabad on the South-east, to Nagpur and Kharagpur in the North-east and to Benares in the North. In many of these places, he has vested interests; for his devotees have donated several buildings and lands to him. In some of them, temples are built and Padukas installed so that devotees congregate there on important festive occasions and perform Baba's Pooja and Arati.

After Baba's return from Hyderabad in 1926, his health was not quite good and so he removed himself to Nadiad in Gujarat and spent some time there alone undisturbed by his devotees. On his way back to Sakuri, he halted at Bombay with Seth Govinddas at Walkeshwar (1st August 1926). This was a memorable occasion. Huge crowds pressed round the bungalow for Darshana. Baba sat up from early morning and the stream of visitors poured in continuously and he could not rise from his seat till midnight. A photo was taken at the time. Baba used to pay frequent visits to Bombay in later years. A temple was built at Vile Parle and Padukas were installed in 1933. Baba went to Surat and Ahmedabad now and then. At Surat, a permanent Yadnya Mandap was put up where several Rudra Yagas were performed at the time of Shivaratri.

At Poona Baba had many devotees. One of them, Shankarappa, a Lingayat by caste, took a vow that he and his wife would not break their fast till Baba visited them in their house. At the end of two years, Baba went over to Poona, graced Shankarappa's house with his presence (13th September 1930) and stayed there for a few days. On one Shankranti Shankarappa garlanded Baba with a rosary of twelve Shiva Lingas of gold as he regarded him as Shiva Himself. Rao Saheb Sathe paid his respects to Baba whenever he had been to Poona and took him to his house. Baba's elder brother too who had settled down at Poona would attend upon him. Baba's first visit to Hyderabad in 1926 has already been described.

Maharaja Sir Kirshan Prasad Bahadur, Raja Narasing Raj, Barrister Shri Kishan and many other devotees of Hyderabad were pressing Baba to visit their place of and on so that thousands who could not afford to go over to Sakuri might have the benefit of his Darshana and spiritual counsel. Late in 1928 Baba went over to Hyderabad for a change, because he was still in a delicate state of health. Raja Narasing Raj had donated about 40 acres of land to Baba, seven or eight miles away from Hyderabad and a place now known as 'Upasani Tekdi'. Here a few days before Datta Jayanti, Raja Kishan Prasad had made elaborate arrangements for Baba's reception and celebration of that festival.

Baba was regarded as Datta Impersonate and duly worshipped. Thousands gathered for Darshana and amidst great jubilation, the function came to a close. Baba thereafter visited Hyderabad almost every year, usually before Datta Jayanti but occasionally before Gurupoornima.

In 1929 a photographer from Wardha, Mr. Ranade by name, invited Baba to his place where he got his Padukas installed. From Wardha Baba went to Nagpur where he spent a few days with Mr. Booty, one of the foremost of Sai Baba's devotees, and Mr. Birdichand, a Marwari devotee of Baba. In later years Rao Bahadur Dr. Pawanaskar, Superintendent of the Mental Hospital at Nagpur, gifted away his garden and bungalow to Baba. Baba was in the practice of visiting Nagpur on his way to and from Benares. More recently a temporary Yadnya Mandap is here erected and Havans carried on now and then, The circle of Baba's devotees included Shrimant Malharirao Holkar of Indore. At his request Baba visited Indore twice and was greatly honoured and worshipped. Shrimant Malhari rao in his turn visited Sakuri several times. Gajanan Seth Goenka of Calcutta prevailed upon Baba to visit Benares. On his way Baba spent a few days at Kharagpur (1934) where his old devotees thronged round him with great fervour and enthusiasm. He comforted and counselled them all; visited his old haunts and left for Benares via Calcutta. Baba was paying frequent visits to Benares in later years.

Late in 1932, some of Baba's devotees took it into their heads to go on a pilgrimage to the cave in Bhorgad Hill near Nasik where Baba had done severe penance for some months. When Baba was informed of it, he took the lead and went in his car with a couple of men for exploring the area and fixing upon the cave referred to· He then took Sati Godavari with him and after his return from the cave said: 'Now the way is clear for you; I have done what is necessary to clear the place from all evil influences'. So a Dindi (procession) started in February 1933 on Rathasapthami day. A small Ratha (chariot) was got ready in which were placed the photos of Sai Baba and Upasani Baba and in the midst of songs, the beating of drums, the blowing of conches and deafening shouts of glee, the procession left Sakuri with Baba's blessings. Many people followed it upto Shirdi, where the procession stopped for a while at Khandoba's temple and Shree Sai's Samadhi. After Pooja and Arati in either place, the Dindi wended its way to Kopargaon and the rest returned to Sakuri. After a week's march, the Dindi reached the Kapari (cave) which is now inaccessible. When Baba had got into it, there was a big tree a branch of which projected upto the mouth of the cave, so that he could make his way to it and get in, in spite of the overhanging rock that now cuts off all posible approaches to the cave. The tree has long since been dead and gone, and now there is no access to the cave. The party pitched up a number of tents on a piece of level ground at the foot of the hill, erected a small Pinjra half way up the hill where they performed Baba's Arati, placing a photo in the cage. After Poornima the party returned to Sakuri. A similar procession went to Kapari in 1934 and thereafter it became an annual function. On the second occasion Baba and Sati Godavaribai graced the function with their presence and after a few hours' stay returned to Sakuri. It is reported that Gajanan Seth, one of the party, tried to ascend the hill and reach upto the cave in, spite of Baba's warning that none should attempt it. He was very much tired and by about mid-day he was in a desparate condition, not being able to go up or come down. At this time Baba's Arati was going on and devotees could observe that a stream of water was slowly flowing out of Baba's photo in the Pinjra. They wondered what it could mean and it was suggested that some one of Baba's devotees might be in trouble. Immediately they glanced in all directions and their eyes fell upon the exhausted and woe-begone countenance of Gajanan. No time was lost in running to his rescue, and he was very soon safely brought down to the foot of the hill. The last of these processions was in 1941, some months before Baba's Mahasamadhi.

From the time of Baba's stay at Shirdi, there were a few small-minded men who could not bear the idea of Sai Baba bestowing his full grace upon him. Their envy and persecution was the immediate cause of Baba's prolonged fast for about two and a half years and his leaving off Shirdi for Nagpur. This group continued its animosity even after Baba's return to Shirdi from Kharagpur. Baba however put up calmly with them as became his spiritual state and status. Baba paid a sudden and unexpected visit to Shirdi in March 1925 for the first time after Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi. The whole village hailed him as the living prototype of Sai Baba and took him to Sai's Samadhi amidst deafening shouts of joy, Bhajan etc. After a few minutes' stay at Khandoba's temple, Baba proceeded to shri Sai's Samadhi, where he put his head on the Padukas for a fairly long time and with tears rolling down his cheeks squatted on the floro, leaning against a pillar. 'Remembrance woke with all her busy train' and Baba could not for some time speak a word. The gush of emotion was too strong when he thought of Shri Sai and his wonderful workings. Some of his old friends showed him round the new structures that had been added during the years that followed Sai's Samadhi, and after taking leave of them all Baba returned to Sakuri. His second visit to Shirdi was more memorable than the first. Chief among the small group of Sai's devotees that were adversely inclined towards Baba was one Mr. Das Ganu who had left off his service in the Police Department and had taken to the service of Sai Baba. He is well noted for his Kirtans in the course of which he would invariably avail himself of the slightest opportunity to talk ill of Baba. He regarded Sai as the Incarnation of Shri Rama and was in the habit of celebrating Ramanavami at Shirdi on a grand scale. Occasionally he was sending mock invitations to Upasani Baba. In 1934 there was such an invitation. Baba somehow took it into his head to accept it (14th April 1935). He left Sakuri unobserved, accompanied by Mr. Wagh and Guruji on the evening of Ramanavmi and reached Shirdi at about sunset. The whole congregation felt that Sai himself had risen out of the tomb to give them Darshana.

Therefore one and all prostrated themselves at Baba's feet. Das Ganu turned up on the scene and Baba with joined palms said, 'Maharaj, I have come in obedience to your call'. Das Ganu felt abashed and could not help falling at Baba's feet and begging his pardon. Baba comforted him and desired to have a Kirtan from him. In the course of his Kirtan, Das Ganu garlanded Baba and the latter put the same garland round his neck, and at the time of parting invited him to go over to Sakuri some time and let the devotees there have the benefit of his Kirtan. Das Ganu promised to do so and Baba returned to Sakuri. Das Ganu, of course, never kept his promise.

Durgabai Karmarkar who was for fifteen years ardently devoted to Baba and followed him like his very shadow through thick and thin showed signs of a changed attitude of mind after the advent of Kanyas at Sakuri, who, she feared, might bring down her status. To this growing jealousy was added an increased thirst for amassing money. Baba however put a stop to it by refusing to accept money himself and forbidding his devotees to send money to Durgabai. She might have further apprehended the marring of her son's future prospects, Under pressure of these or similar causes, she began to give trouble to Baba and the Kanyas in his Seva. When Baba was removed to Nasik during his illness, Durgabai sent him a bottle of Tirtha as she called it, but which turned out to be something suspecious. This Baba never used, but her intentions being so foul and unworthy, it was thought desirable to remove her from Sakuri. She was asked to stay in any place of her choice except Sakuri and she would be provided for. After a couple of months' stay with Seth Govinddas of Bombay, she left Baba for good and fixed up her abode at Sholapur. One Mr. Kirloskar of Aundh State in Satara District had been publishing a monthly magazine in which there appeared some articles against Baba as early as May, June and August 1934. These articles issued from the pen of one Mr. Mahadeo Divekar Shastri of Wai who might presumably have obtained materials for his campaign of vilification in part at least from Durgabai and her son. Baba was however proof against all such scandals and after 1936 there seemed to have come about a change in Durgabai's attitude towards Baba. She became sick and miserable and in her sorrow and wretchedness, she once more turned her eyes to Sakuri. She wrote to Baba expressing her desire to go over to Sakuri. In his greatness of heart and abounding love for sinners, Baba immediately sent Mr. Purandhare and Mr. Yeshwantrao Boravke to bring her over here. As she was too weak to bear the strain of the journey, medical aid was provided for her at Sholapur itself. She passed away on 6th May 1939. Her son Raghunath performed her last rites at Pandharpur and himself died shortly after.

The year 1934 was a period of trial for Baba's devotees, though not for Baba. A number of false and fictitious charges were hurled against him from the middle of August and all of them were either withdrawn or compounded before the close of the year. They took their source from and were fostered by several ingenious brains of Kopargaon some of whom had approached Baba with a request to subscribe for an educational institution. But Baba refused to promote the cause of a system of education which tends to increase Avidya or spiritual ignorance. Thereupon a plan was hatched for somehow bringing Baba into the Court and scandalising him. One of them, Mr. Bhangre, posing as a devotee of Baba and taking upon himself the task of defending Baba from the attacks of Mr. Divekar Shastri and Mr. Kirloskar, filed a complaint of defamation against them. Baba and Sati Godavari were cited as witnesses. The case was filed at Kopargaon in August, but was transferred to Ahmednagar in September. In November the parties who never intended to push on the case to its logical termination, got it compounded just after the evidence of Baba and Sati Godavari was recorded. As offshoots of this major issue, there were three minor complaints viz., (1) A person who pretended to be a devotee complained that, when he had offered a cocoanut, Baba threw it at him causing him hurt. This complaint was withdrawn soon after. (2) Raghunath, son of Durgabai, conspired with one Mr. Gajanan Rao Route of Bombay, who filed against Baba a suit for Rs. 50,000 alleged to have been borrowed from him on a promissory note by Raghunath who posed to be the authorised Manager of Upasani Baba. The case was withdrawn paying costs. (3) The last one was a more serious charge. Baba was sitting for Ganesh Yaga in September (the first of its kind performed at Sakuri), and a charge of murder was brought against him, alleging that the murdered person was buried underneath the Homa Kund. The Mamlatdar from Kopar–gaon arrived with the Police Sub-Inspector on the spot to investigate the case. They pretended to dig out here and there to find out the corpse, in vain. At that time were present Mr. N. G. Bharucha, Extra Assistant Commissioner from Nagpur, Khan Saheb Dorabji M. Daruwala, Ex-Registrar of the Bombay Small Causes Court, Shri Kishan, Barrister from Hyderabad, and other distinguished devotees. The Mamlatdar got confused as he knew the hollowness of the allegation and walked away without much ado. All the while Baba went on undisturbed with the performance of the Yaduya, as though nothing had happened. The case against Baba (1935) under the Deodasi Act has already been mentioned and after that Baba was left unmolested.

The Advaitic state or the state of transcendentalism is one of perfect neutrality, indifferent to both good and evil. The highest as well as the meanest is included in it. It pervades all creation and hence Baba declared in one of his discourses: "I am Rama, I am Krishna, I am Vishnu, I am Shiva; but do not suppose for a moment I am to be found in them alone. I am equally present in a dog, a horse, or a donkey". "Men in their ignorance strive to rise high and fall. He who tries to come down as low as possible rises to the highest". It is in accordance with this principle that Baba had taken upon himself the state of Shiva, accepting everything that is wretched, base and averse to the average human mind. The cremation ground is his abode. He is Nude or has only a piece of gunny bag to clad himself with. 'People generally go in for good things of the world', he exclaimed on several occasions. 'I have recourse to the reverse aspect; I go in for what appears to be good-for-nothing or useless'. When a horse was presented to him, he desired to have an ass as well, and accordingly one was purchased for Rs. 30 at Kopargaon and brought to him. Sometime later a potter presented him with another ass. These are made to draw water in the garden, but they are brought in at the time of Arati on alternate days along with the horse. The horse symbolises royalty and the ass stupidity, and for a Gunateeta both states are equal. Once a curious visitor questioned Baba as to the significance of the ass. Baba humorously remarked: 'The majority of men who come here, as soon as they see the donkey at the gate, take it as an ill omen and walk away, thereby saving me so much trouble'. He then went on to explain its true spiritual significance. In Marati an ass is called 'Gadhav' (गाधव) but its true name, Baba said, is 'Ga' (गा) means earth, 'Dhava' (धव) means husband; 'Gadhava' therefore means Vishnu, the husband of the earth. The ass thus symbolises Divinity, for the divine state is a state of thoughtlessness निर्विमर्श स्थिति (free from ideas of good or evil) and the ass is ever in this state. Therefore unless one attains this ass-state, one cannot attain divinity. This illustration serves to prove that a Gunateeta is equally disposed towards the states of good or evil; for the pairs of opposites are but passing phases of experience and as such, he is unaffected by them.

CHAPTER VI

LAST DAYS AND MAHASAMADHI

The last half a dozen years of Baba's career (1936 onwards) were occupied with good works for the welfare of the world. The rich harvest of Satkarmas gathered in during this period of peace and tranquility more than compensated the struggles and sufferings of his earlier life. He was now fully established in his proper place of a Sadguru and the thousands that continually flocked round him were having spiritual food administered to them according to their needs. Good works (Satkarmas) performed in the presence or by the directions of a God-man bear fruit rapidly and hence devotees used to congregate at Sakuri on all important festive occasions and carry on Satkarmas like Bhajan, Pooja, Japa etc. Baba had a special predilection for Yadnyas as being a Satkarma in which not only the souls of the human beings that participate in them but also those of the numerous material objects utilised for the purpose get purified. Therefore the performance of Yadnyas received his ever increasing attention. In the early days of settlement at Sakuri, Brahmins were performing Havans every now and then; but after the advent of Kanyas, Baba thought it better to get the Havans performed by them, as they were untainted by the Rajasic and Tamasic activities of the world. Punya Karma performed by them will be more acceptable to the gods and will yield quicker and better results than that performed by Brahmins who, though they may not be mercenary, are nevertheless less Satvic so long as they have not left off their worldly ways. With this end in view, Baba had his Kanyas duly trained in the chanting of Veda Mantras and the performance of Vedic rites and ceremonies. As the Kanyas are his Dharma Patnis (in as much as they are instrumental in the performance of Dharmic Satkriyas), he used to sit with them for the Havans or authorise them to perform the Yadnyas on his behalf.

These Yadnyas are not so much for the Kanyas as for the purification of the devotees that gather for the occasion or maintain their intimate and unbroken connection with Baba, and the welfare of the world in general. At the end of the Havan, Baba would sprinkle holy water on the heads of the devotees and distribute Bhasma or Udi (holy ashes).

On all such occasions Baba was in the habit of exhorting his devotees to betake themselves more and more to the proper discharge of Satkarmas and pave the way for the attainment of happiness here and hereafter. They may, to eke out their livelihood, have recourse to service, business and other kinds of worldly activity which tends to augment Rajas and Tamas inherent in them; but if they properly utilise the rest of the time at their disposal in the disinterested performance of Dharmic Satkriyas, thereby increasing their Satvaguna, their worldly activities do not hamper their spiritual progress to any great extent. Therefore one should spend as much time as he can spare in the performance of righteous acts.

> "Fill the minutes as they come and go with good thoughts, good words and good deeds".

Satkarmas performed in a pure Satvic state of mind are far more beneficial. Likewise those discharged in holy places or at auspicious times पर्वकाल such as Sankranti, Eclipses etc. yield manifold fruit. A small act of merit at such times is capable of yielding a thousand-fold fruit. An actor while playing a part puts on a guise; but as soon as his role is discharged, he puts it off. In the same manner, though we take to service or worldly activity for making both ends meet, we should come out of it as soon as we have done with it and have recourse to the religious and spiritual aspect of life.

In February 1939 Shri Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, Himalayas, paid a visit to Sakuri. He was greatly delighted at the religious life of the Ashram and as a token of his full satisfaction with the life and activities of the Kanyas, he presented several of them with religious books. He had long talks with Baba on the subject of Dharma (religion), the present chaotic condition of the Hindu Dharma, the need for its reform etc., and expressed his regret that holy men were helpless to advance its cause. Circumstances are such that only an Avatara will be capable of re-establishing Dharma in the world. This interesting talk of the Swamiji evoked a sympathetic response from Baba who burst out with a prophetic announcement of the future Incarnation and his work, mention of which will be made in the next Chapter. The Swamiji spent Shivaratri at Sakuri. He was duly worshipped by Baba and his devotees as Shankara impersonate. After a short stay the Swamiji left Sakuri for Dhulia.

In April of the same year Baba gave Sanyasa to his old mother aged about 90 on Ramanavami day. The question whether women are authorised by the Shastras to have recourse to Sanyasa is hotly contested, but Satpurushas have not hesitated to declare that deserving women are as qualified and eligible to embrace the Fourth Ashram as men. In this connection it is interesting to note that one Chapter of 'Ramana Gita' is devoted to this subject. Bhagwan Ramana Maharshi emphatically declares here that women too can have recourse to Sanyasa. God-men are essentially one and their views on all important spiritual subjects are one. Baba had, on his personal responsibility as a Sadguru, given Sanyasa Diksha to his mother. Thereafter her Arati was performed twice everyday. As she was very old and emaciated, every day weighed more heavily upon her; and on Vaishaka Amavasya, a little after midnight (May 1939), she became one with the Absolute. She was buried in due form a few yards north-west of the Pinjra, and a small temple was erected on her Samadi. Padukas were installed on Dasara, the day of Shri Sai's Mahasamadi, and her Pooja and Arati are performed twice a day.

A few months before the end of the year 1940, Baba gave out definite instructions regarding the future working of the Kanya Kumari Sthan. He was also gradually dropping hints regarding his future. He used to talk in a general way about the instability of the physical body. Laws of nature must be obeyed by all, even if they be gods or God-men. The body that has a birth must also have a death. A God-man is Ever Existent even if he is no more in flesh and blood, and they who take him to be dead, when his body falls, are in the darkest depths of ignorance. With these and similar words, he would bring home to the devotees (particularly to the Kanyas) the fact that he would sooner or later cast off his mortal coil and even then, HE WOULD EVER EXIST FOR THEM. They would be able to experience the same in the measure in which they would put faith in his words and act upto his teachings. He had left clear directions as to where and how his body should be disposed off and how they should conduct themselves in his physical absence etc. In December 1940 Baba had been to Benares for the last time, stopping on the way at Drug in C.P. with Mr.Bharucha for a week, and for a day or two at Katni. Many Parsi devotees accompanied him to Benares where he performed several Kriyas for the redemption of the ancestors of his Parsi and Hindu devotees. Baba returned to Sakuri in January.

The Sankranti which marks the commencement of the Uttarayana has been believed to hold out great spiritual possibilities and is hence regarded by Baba's devotees as a festival of supreme importance. They therefore flocked in great numbers to Sakuri for this occasion in January 1941. Surya Yaga was conducted in the Yadnya Mandap for a full fortnight. This yaga will ever remain memorable to the devotees present on the occasion as it was the last of its kind for which Baba sat in person with the Kanyas, clad in female attire to Symbolise the state of Adimaya, Adishakti. (The spiritual import of this transformation has been detailed in several of Baba's discourses and need not be dwelt upon here). A photo of Baba in this garb was taken. Kavishwar Buva, the famous Kirtankar of Triambakeshwar, delivered a kirthan bringing out the divine state of Baba and comparing it with that of Shanker from whose locks had flown the holy Godavari. Besides this interesting and illuminating Kirthan, the devotees had an intellectual feast from Baba who discourse on this occasion on subjects like Maya and Avidya, God and Jiva, how a jiva can attain God-head etc. It was now that Baba, seated on the zopala (swing) in the Pinjra hall, recited and made his devotees repeat with him the great Surya mantra.

सूर्यनारायणं देवं साच्चिदानदं सद्गुरुम् ।
अज्ञानतमनाशाय वंदे सर्वात्मकं रविम् ॥

In February 1941 Baba paid his last visit to Surat. Before stepping into the car at the time of returning to Sakuri, Baba stood for several minutes glancing at his devotees and tears gushed down his cheeks. No one could then understand its significance, but after Baba's Mahasamadhi in December of the same year, his Surat devotees could construe that Baba's tears were an indirect indication of his bidding adieu to Surat for ever.

On 26th April 1941 Baba came to Shani's temple to distribute Prasad, that being a Shanivar Amavasya (a New Moon day falling on Saturday is held to be sacred, as it is propitious to Shani). In the course of a short address, Baba talked of his going to have a transfer shortly. 'It is not like one of your Government transfers', he observed. 'We can have neither a reversal nor cancellation of orders. We must pack away as soon as orders are received.' These words were felt as ominous and one or two of the devotees actually asked Baba for an explanation the next day. Baba evaded the issue and explained away his statement saying, 'I have got vested interests in several places. I may go and live for some time at Nagpur or Hyderabad or some such place. Do not worry anyhow. Rest assured, I am ever with you and you will also be with me'. During this period Baba had been paying frequent visits to Satana, his birth place, where he was building a temple on the site of his old house. In the course of such a visit to supervise the progress of the work, Baba suddenly went to see his old friend Tatya Mule; who had been bed-ridden for some time. This gentleman, after leaving Sakuri, had taken Sanyasa at Satana. He never met Baba afterwards. On the afternoon of 7th October Baba somehow took it into his head to visit Tatya on his sick bed. He sat by him for a couple of hours, administering spiritual comfort. On the 13th Tatya expired.

On 24th November 1941 Baba left Sakuri for Hyderabad via Sholapur with Sati Godavari and a number of other Kanyas. Just before starting, Baba appears to have said: 'I shall wind up everything within a month'. At Hyderabad Raja Narasing Raj garlanded Baba and had brought another garland for Sati Godavari who was seated nearby; but Baba abruptly observed, 'You can worship Godavari hereafter and you will doubtless attend to the needs of the Kanyas whenever they come over here.

Odd as these words were, the devotees failed to appreciate their full significance at that time, though they felt a sort of misgiving that all was not well. During his stay here a number of religious minded Madrasee gentlemen who had come to know of Baba's sojourn at Hyderabad gathered round him for Darshana and pressed Baba for Upadesha. Baba gave them this Mantra:—

" ॐ नमः सद्गुरो श्री उपासनिनाथ परमानंद अद्वय। "

and made them repeat it with him ten times. On 9th December 1941 he left Hyderabad and reached Poona on the 12th via Sholapur. This was Baba's last visit to that place. Baba had put up with one Mr. Namdevrao Uplap, an old devotee, who had long since been requesting Baba for Mantropadesha. One evening when Mr. Uplap came in to light the lamp, Baba accosted him and started reciting this Mantra:—

" निवृत्ति ज्ञानदेव सोपान मुक्ताबाई,
एकनाथ नामदेव तुकारम, तुकाराम। "

Baba made him repeat it with him twelve times. Immediately on leaving Baba, the full import of this Mantra flashed upon Mr. Uplap's mind. 'By treading the path of renunciation, (निवृत्ति), thou acquirest Knowledge (ज्ञानदेव), this Knowledge serves as a staircase (सोपान); leading to Liberation (मुक्ताबाई); when thou hast the experience of the Advaitic state (एकनाथ), thereafter thou art one with Rama (तुकाराम). While at Poona, a devotee by name Krishnam Bhatji prevailed upon Baba to visit the Samadhi of Jnaneswar Maharaj at Alandi. Baba remained prostrate at the Samadhi for about half an hour. After his return to Poona, he was observed to be in a strange mood for a couple of hours. He did not allow any one to place his head on his feet, but putting a cocoanut on the ground, desired that all should take Darshana of or pay their offerings to the cocoanut. He also muttered: 'I am tired of it, I shall close it up very shortly'. Men and women construed these words as they pleased; some took it to refer to the war; but none apprehended the catastrophe that was close at hand. When Baba was at Poona, Shri Narayan Maharaj of Kedgaon happened to go over there. Krishnam Bhatji who was also acquainted with Narayan Maharaj intimated his arrival to Baba and requested permission to bring about a meeting of the two. Baba refused saying, 'He is too great and I am too small. You simply convey my prostrations to him.' By the time Krishnam Bhatji went to find out Narayan Maharaj, the latter had returned to Kedgaon. He therefore went all the way from Poona to Kedgaon and conveyed Baba's salutations to the Maharaj. The Maharaj said: "Tell him that his prostrations have been accepted." This anecdote is interesting because Baba had received a Prayoga (a spiritual push) from the Maharaj before coming into contact with Sai Baba and his career practically came to a close with his salutations to the Maharaj. Baba returned from Poona to Sakuri on the evening of the 19th. On the 20th and 21st he gave Darshana as usual, though he complained of some slight pain in the chest. On the afternoon of the

22nd he left for Satana where the temple work, which was started about a year ago, was nearly complete. That evening he pressed the workmen to speed up the work. 'The Sun is setting, the Sun is setting', he reiterated. When he fixed the twelve Jyotirlingas in their proper places with his own hands, a feeling of exhaustion or one of satisfaction at having completed a difficult task came over him. For a long time he kept on rolling in the open space in front of the Lingas saying, 'My task is done; you have to take care of the rest'. That night went very badly with Baba, but he never woke up or worried anybody. Early next morning, the 23rd December he directed Sadanand, his car driver, to cancel his original programme of leaving for Nasik. At about 8 A.M. Rajsi Mistry, the building engineer, was called in. In the course of a prolonged talk, Baba gave him to understand that he was almost on the point of collapsing the previous night, but he was providentially saved. Rajsi Mistry deeply regretted that he could not be of any service to Baba in that predicament, as he was utterly unaware of Baba's condition. Baba laughed it away and continued to crack jokes with the Mistry for a couple of hours. 'Will you allow me to DEPART now? Can you manage it all in my ABSENCE'?, he inquired of the Mistry, who, ignorant of the dramatic irony of the situation, answered in the affirmative. Bidding farewell to his Janma Bhumi for ever, Baba hastily left Satana on the evening of the 23rd and reached Sakuri a little after 7 P.M.

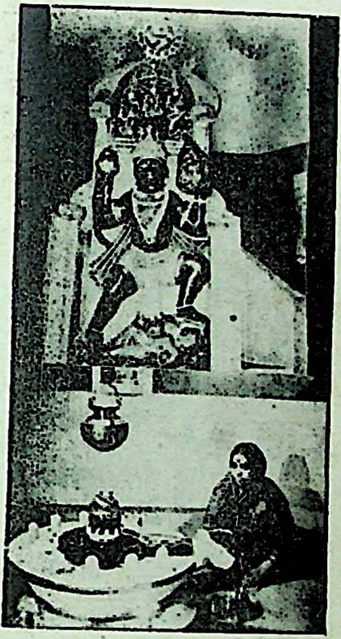
It was Baba's custom, whenever he returned from abroad, to get down from the car at the Sabha Mantap, take Darshana of the Pinjra and then go to his room. Today however, the car drove straight up to the 'Zopadi under the Creeper'. Baba went in and rested a while. He complained of slight pain in the chest, but neither allowed any plaster to be applied nor the doctor to be called in. He went on talking on several subjects till 11 P.M. and then fell asleep. At 3 A. M. on 24th December 1941 he sat up with an exclamation 'Is this the time to sleep?'. Sati Godavaribai who was dosing a bit was startled from her nap by a voice which seemed to say: 'Sleepest thou still? The time has come when you are wanted'. Baba spoke a little by way of advice to the Kanyas in those morning hours, but never accepted any medical aid. He would not allow Jiji to feel his pulse even. About sunrise, assuring those in attendance that he would be perfectly alright within half an hour and expressing a desire to rest for a while, he stretched himself at full length and closed his eyes. Just at this time most probably the spirit had cast off its carnal cage and merged itself into the Absolute.

It was not till a few minutes later that those in attendance could scent the real state of things. Dr. Patel was immediately called in and he pronounced that it was a state of the separation of the soul from the body; but for the satisfaction of the devotees; who might be inclined to interpret it as a Yogic trance, he suggested that his opinion might be confirmed by another Medical Practitioner before announcing it to the public. By about 10 o'clock Dr. Mehta from Kopargaon arrived and it was then declared that Shri Baba existed no more in flesh and blood. The routine of work laid down by Baba was not stopped; everything went on as though nothing had happened. Wires were despatched to all important centres, inviting the devotees to have a last look at Baba's physical body before it was finally put in the Samadhi and was taken away from their view for ever. Thursday the 25th was fixed for interring his body and before evening of that day, devotees who were in receipt of the news and could afford to be at Sakuri congregated here.

On the evening of the 25th, Baba's body was duly bathed by the Kanyas and was laid on a silk carpet. After all the devotees had worshipped and taken Darshan, it was taken round in procession to the Datta Mandir and Bapusaheb's Samadhi with Bhajan and the chanting of Vedic Hymns etc. One and all irrespective of caste, creed or status having taken Darshana of the body at Bapusaheb's Samadhi, it was brought into the Pinjra Hall and laid on the Zopala (swing) on which Baba used to sit for Darshana. Everyone was given a chance of pouring a little water on Baba's feet by way of Abhisheka, and the body was finally deposited in the earth in front of the Pinjra in a lying posture with the head towards the South. The clock struck eight when the body was lowered into the pit, perhaps the very time of Baba's birth. Each of the devotees put in a handful of earth and filled up the Samadhi. Later on, the Samadhi was duly built and has assumed its present form by the end of the year. Baba's statue which was prepared during his life-time was installed in the Pinjra on 13th January 1942. The Samadhi is enclosed and two pairs of Padukas established, one within and the other without. The enclosure is the Holy of Holies; and none but the Kanyas go in. The Pooja and Abhisheka of the Samadhi are carried on exclusively by the Kanyas.

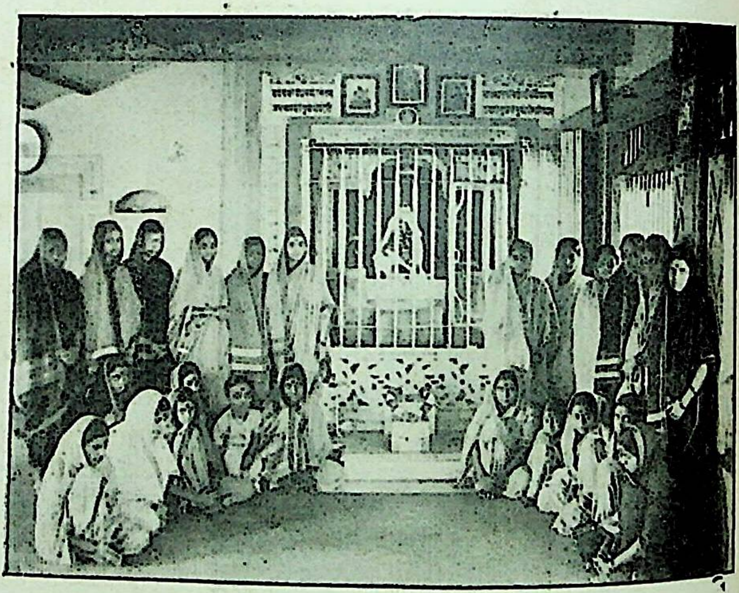
The outer pair of Padukas are for the use of all other devotees. The absence of Baba's physical existence has, however, intensified his spiritual presence everywhere and in everything. Devotees have felt him now nearer and dearer than before. Instead of looking up to his cage of flesh for Darshana, they now take his Darshana in the sanctuary of their own hearts. It is the common experience of devotees that they do feel his living presence everywhere, their calls are answered as of old, thereby proving beyond a doubt Baba's statement, 'I AM NEVER ABSENT FROM SAKURI'.

Indulgent reader, kindly bear with us a little longer; fly on the wings of your imagination a short way back along the passage of time and into the immensity of space. Alight at Hyderabad whither Baba has been on one of his customary visits to the Nizam's capital (about 1930). None of the Kanyas is present; Jiji alone is in attendance. One day Baba presents her with a string of flax knotted all over. The lady casts a curious look of inquiry at Baba who hastens to explain it. 'It is my rosary', he remarks, 'You rich people go in for beads strung together in gold and silver. A poor man like myself cannot afford to have such a rosary. Therefore I use this string of knots to tell beads in my Japa'. The lady



SHRI RAMA MANDIR, SATANA,

(Inner view showing the murti of Maruti with Rama and Laxmana and the twelve Jyotir Lingas)



SHRI BABA'S SAMADHI,
(*In front of the Pinjra.*)

is astounded but accepts the gift. She finds that the knots fall short of 108, the usual number of beads in a rosary. Baba, however, explains it away, saying that what is important is not so much the number as the constant repetition of the Mantra. Her scruples thus silenced, she uses the string for her Japa. We fly back to Sakuri and years roll on. In course of time the string becomes worn out and unusable. The lady preserves it in a small silver tin, making it an object of daily worship. Some time after Baba's Mahasamadhi, she is one day washing and cleaning the articles of her worship, and one Prahlad Londe sits by, watching the process. He enquires after the contents of the silver tin whereupon Jiji narrates the whole story with tears in her eyes. Prahlad's curiosity is roused. He takes out the string and counts the knots which number 71. He exchanges glances of surprise with Jiji & each heaves a heavy sob. Baba left this world at the age of 71.! Intelligent reader, draw your own conclusion. Is that string intended to symbolise the string of Baba's life or is it mere coincidence that the number of knots in the string and the number of years of Baba's worldly existence tally !

CHAPTER VII

BABA'S MESSAGE

Before closing this short account of Baba's life and work, it is necessary to attempt, as far as practicable, a brief survey of the main features of his teachings. Those of his devotees who have come into close per sonal contact with him have had sufficient experience of Baba's greatness both as a God-man and a teacher. A look, a word or a touch from Baba sufficed to bring home to his devotees his love and sympathy for them. The paternal care with which he attended to their needs both spiritual and temporal; and the kindly counsel with which he lightened the sorrows and sufferings weighing heavily upon their hearts, was a matter of daily experience. To such no word of explanation or appreciation is needed; but for the generations that follow, who can never have the idea of the living personality of Baba, what he has left behind in the form of his discourses and the Kanya Kumari Sthan at Sakuri are the only living commentary of what Baba was. Spirituality is not a concrete science, and as such cannot lend itself to scientific investigation or demonstration. It deals mainly with the mental and supra-mental states and hence cannot fully be brought within the compass of reason. Faith and intuition play a large part in unravelling the mysteries of this subject, which therefore appears questionable at several points to the arguing intellect. The chief function of Saints is on the astral or spiritual plane, which it is impossible for the intellect to understand or appreciate. Even if their working makes itself felt on the material plane, as it is bound to in course of time, it is impossible to connect cause and consequence, first on account of the distance of time that intervenes between them and secondly on account of the limitations of our knowledge pertaining to natural laws and their operations. Thus having due regard to our limitations, personal as well as circumstantial, we shall now venture in our own humble way to place before the reader a few leading features of Baba's teachings.

Taking for granted that the goal of life is to attain lasting bliss, and that religion provides or ought to provide a regular and systematic course for achieving this object, Baba insists on strict adherence to Swadharma as determined by

(1) the natural function of the sexes in harmony with the economy of nature; and

(2) the religion in which one is born.

His theory concerning the relative functions of man and woman, woman's place in society, education proper to woman etc., is based on the doctrine that woman has an extra percentage of Satva Guna inherent in her composition, which enables her to be a better spiritual medium; whereas man is constituted with a greater degree of Rajas and Tamas which fits him better for worldly activity. Whether or not one agrees with this doctrine in these days of liberty, equality and fraternity, there cannot be two opinions on this point, that by adhering strictly to the disinterested discharge of domestic and religious duties—without indulging in Rajasic worldly activity–woman can rapidly augment Satva Guna in herself by developing the virtues of patience, forbearance, long suffering and fortitude, sympathy, kindness and love. By competing with man for supremacy or preference in a worldly career, she forfeits the qualities of gentleness, modesty and compassion natural to her sex, and loses all claims to be classed as the 'weaker or gentle sex'. The net result of modern attempts for the emancipation and education of woman has undoubtedly been an unhealthy spirit of rivalry and competition between the sexes, contributing not a little to the growing misery of the world. Baba, therefore, advocates only religious education for woman, which enables her to take her proper place with man and be an equal partner (Ardhangi) in the achievement of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. The Kanya Kumari Sthan is a direct outcome of this theory of Baba concerning women. Even if one cannot put his faith in the principle that innumerable souls will be saved through the medium of a Kanya, it cannot be denied that this Sthan supplies the great need for an Asylum where women can lead a life of celibacy and dedicate themselves wholly to the service of God. Institutions there are, affording facilities to men for devoting themselves entirely to a life of spirituality; but none such exists for women, so far at least as India is concerned. (The institution of Budhist Bhikhshunis is practically a matter of history). How far this Institution will be able to influence society and achieve its objects and ideals, time alone will have to show.

In respect of religion, Baba is thoroughly conservative (almost reactionary in these days of free thinking). He never countenances the complete overthrowing of the tried old order in preference to an entirely new scheme of things, though he is not averse to making necessary alterations or modifications to meet the exigencies of the times. He takes his stand on the four Varnas (castes). These distinctions and differences in Hindu Society are not based upon social status, but constitute a course of graded spiritual training to lead one to the transcendental, Advaitic state. They form, as it were, specialised channels for the progress of the individual souls in their march towards their spiritual goal. If this order does not function properly and a change is imminent, God does not require a reminder. Change in Dharma is the specified work of an Avatara and Lord Shri Krishna has emphatically declared that He would incarnate himself if and when Dharma is in chaos and needs reform.

"यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भार ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥"

> 'Whenever Dharma is in disorder and Adharma rampant, Oh Arjuna! then shall 1 incarnate Myself'.

Untouchability Baba explains on the basis of the Karma doctrine. It is for the expiation of some heinous sin in the past that the untouchables are obliged to be in their present state of wretchedness. It is better that they spend out their Prarabdha in this life rather than create more evil Prarabdh for the future by trying to avoid or escape from their present state. In this connection may be mentioned Baba's prophecy to Shri Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math in February 1939, mentioned in the previous chapter. Baba declared that an incarnation will shortly manifest Himself on earth in a European country. He will be all powerful and bear down everything before him. He will see to it that Vedic Dharma is firmly re-established in India.

These controversial subjects apart, Baba holds out to his devotees innumerable ways of approach to their spiritual goal. A few of the more prominent ones will engage our attention here:—

I. Viyoga Abhyas instead of Yoga Abhyas,

By Yoga is ment yoking together i.e., union of the individual with the universal soul. For this, the usual method connoted by the term Yoga is the practice of Pranayam (withholding of the breath) etc. Baba never advocated this path. It is attended with difficulty and danger and is not meant for the present times. Instead, he asks his devotees to practice Viyoga Abhyas. i. e., leaving off or detaching oneself from objects of sense enjoyment.

मुक्तिमिच्छसि चेद्राजन् विषयान्विषवत्त्यज।

> 'If thou yearnest for liberation, My child!, shun the objects of sense enjoyment, as thou wilt poison'.

'Refuse to give the mind what it craves for. Even if it goes on harping upon it, let not the body run after it, and in course of time the mind has to come to rest. The worldly and divine paths run close and parallel to each other. By consciously refusing to tread the one, you unconsciously march along the other'.

2. Punya Karma or Acts of Merit:—

Righteous deeds form the basis of all happiness, temporal or spiritual; and as such, it is incumbent on every one to take more and more to the disinterested discharge of Satkarmas. Good works performed with a desire bestow worldly happiness; those performed as duty or an offering to God or for the welfare of humanity conduce to the spiritual welfare of the soul and lead to lasting bliss. Again, Satkarmas performed in holy places, at auspicious times like Sankranti, Eclipses, etc , and in a pure Satvic state of mind yield manifold fruit. Those performed in the presence of or by the directions of a God-man produce very rapid results. It is interesting to note that

Baba was wont to prescribe some sort of Punya Karma—Pradakshina, Abhisheka, Japa, Homa and the like—for the curing of diseases or conferring of worldly benefits.

> काङ्न्तः कर्मणां सिद्धि यजान्त इहदेवताः ।
> क्षिप्रंहिमानु षे लोके सिद्धेर्भवाति कर्मजा ॥

> 'Those who worship God here on earth for the fulfilment of their desires, do speedily obtain the fruit of their Karma in this world of the mortals'.

3. Suffering as a Means of Self.purification.

Baba lays stress upon suffering as the surest means of self-purification. Suffering voluntarily undertaken in the name of or for the sake of God as well as suffering for the alleviation of the misery of others ennobles and cleanses the mind to a greater degree and in a shorter time than any other form of self-discipline. Any amount of suffering in the course of a purely worldly life cannot, however, be instrumental in securing Spiritual Bliss.

> कष्टाकष्टतरं दुःखं योमद्भक्तः सदा भजेत् ।
> स एव मत्पदं याति पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

> 'That devotee of mine who ever loves and worships me in spite of

the greatest suffering will alone attain My state and will not be obliged to take birth again'.

'If eternal Peace be the goal of thy desire, suffer, suffer till this journey ends; but let not a person suffer at thy hands'—SHAIKH ATTAR.

4. Importance of Nama-Smarana.

In Kaliyuga men are short-lived and short-witted. Both physically and mentally they cannot withstand prolonged Tapas. Therefore the easiest and the best way of attaining God in this Yuga is by Nama-Smarana or the remembrance of His Holy Name, by which is meant not the mere repetition (vocal or mental) of his name or names but making the mind dwell upon the attributes associated with that name. A name at once conjures up a form and a form brings in its train all its accomplishments and achievements. Hence Nama-Smarana signifies the mental rumination of the qualities and achievements of the form associated with that name so as to assimilate those qualities ourselves and exemplify them in our daily life. It is only this kind of Nama-Smarana that can purify the mind and is of any spiritual value or importance.

रामनाम सब कोइ कहे ठग ठाकूर और चोर।
जिस नामसे ध्रुव प्रल्हाद तर गये वो नाम कछु ।।और।।

'Rama-Nama is repeated by several grades of people—high and low; but the name by which Dhruva and Prahlad attained liberation is something quite different.'

5. Association With God-men.

The simplest and the quickest way of attaining the goal of life is by close and permanent association with a God-man, by copying whose example the process of self-purification goes on by leaps and bounds. The God-man himself serves the purpose of a target for fixing one's attention upon. He guides and directs, never compels. Baba often compares him to a big drain. By opening our connection with it, all our filth will be carried away. Or again, he is like a railway engine. By attaching ourselves intimately to him, he carries us to our destination, as the engine carries away all the compartments attached to it. One requisite condition, however, is that we should stick to him to the last, till the destination is reached. If our faith gets lukewarm and we leave him half-way, he will not do anything for us on his own initiative. To those who continue their devotion to the end, the God-man will see to it that at the time of death, their mind is arrested on a good thought so that in their next birth (if they are to have one) they will continue their spiritual march unimpeded till they reach the goal.

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्व पापोभ्यो मोक्षयित्यामि मा शुजः ॥

"Abandoning all other ways and means, surrender thyself to Me alone; grieve not, I shall free thee from all thy sins".

Chronological List of Events in Upasani Baba's Life

15-5-1870	Birth of Kashinath Govind Upasani Sastri (Baba).
1877	His investiture with sacred thread.
1884	,, first marriage and flight from home.
1885	,, first wife's death and second marriage.
1886	,, second flight from home and frequent flights.
1890	,, visit to Kalyan.
	,, Samadhi in Bhorgad Cave.
21-7-1890	Kashinath returns to Satana.
8-8-1890	Kashinath's father's death on Gokulashtami (Friday)
6-12-1891	,, grandfather's death on Naga Panchami (Sunday or Monday).
1892—1893	Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak helps family for one year.
1892—1895	Kashinath at Sangli, studies Ayurveda and Sanskrit and begins practice.
1896	Mishap at Jalgaon.
1896—1905	Kashinath practises medicine at Amraoti & Nagpur.
1902—1905	and edits Medical (vernacular) monthly.

1906—1908	Kashinath,—a malguzar in the Gwalior State.
1908	,, returns poorer and weaker to Amraoti.
10-4-1910	,, starts on pilgrimage for Omkareswar.
	,, Respiration collapses. Miraculous escape.
Apr. 1910	,, Breathing troubles. Remedies tried in vain.
1911	,, at Dhulia.
April 1911	,, starts in quest of yogis to cure respiratory disease.
	,, at Rahuri, meets old man, whose prescription cures disease.
June 1911	,, at Jejuri and Bombay.
27-6-1911	,, first visit to Shirdi.
29-6-1911	,, leaves Shirdi.
6-7-1911	,, returns to Shirdi.
Oct. 1911	,, cooks his food at Khandoba temple & Sai Baba visits him as dog and Sudra.
1-12-1911	G. S. Khaparde's visit to Shirdi.
1-1-1912	Balakrishna Upasani Sastri discovers Kashinath is at Khhandoba's at Shirdi (by Sai Baba's direction) and leaves it next day.
6-2-1912	Kashinath composes Arati verses on Sai Baba.

Jan. to 27-3-1912	„ attends G. S. Khaparde's religious classes.
July 1912	„ stops dining at Kakawada in disgust.
10-8-1912	„ and others install Saipaduka under Neem tree.
Nov. 1912	Narsobawadi palmist visits Kashinath Maharaj.
Jan. 1913	Kashinath's anna-dwesha becomes intense.
15-4-1913	Kashinath's pulse is 40 to the minute.
July 1913	„ „ 20 „ „
„ 1913	„ tells H. N. Apte that he despairs of his own life and Apte writes to Kashinath's brother Balkrishna Sastri to come.
	Balkrishna Sastri's visit to Kashinath.
18-7-1913	Kashinath receives worship (as guru) for the first time, by Sai Baba's order.
Nov. 1913	Bapu Saheb Jog takes food to Kashinath.
Jan. 1914	Sankranti; Kashinath starts taking liquid food daily.
25-7-1914	Kashinath leaves Shirdi for Sindhi.
24-8-1914	„ eats solid food on Ganesh Chaturthi at Sindhi.
Sept. 1914	removes to Nagpur.
2-10-1914	„ leaves Nagpur.

4-10-1914	,,	arrives at Kharagpur and remains incognito till Christmas, in Chinnasami's.
'Xmas 1914	,,	gets much Worship.
Feb. 1915 to Aug. 1915	,,	shifts to Bhaggu's hut, and scavenger's quarters.
Aug. 1915	,,	leaves Kharagpur for Nagpur, then visits Sindhi, returns to Nagpur.
1916	,,	visits Shirdi, Poona, Satana and spends some months at Shirdi and leaves it.
1917	,,	again visits Shirdi, Miraj and settles at Sakuri.
1920		Kashinath's visit to Kasi for Sai Baba's anniversary.
1922		First biography of Upasani Baba (by Nath Madhao) published.
25-12-1921 to 31-1-1924		Baba lives inside a Pinjra or cage (self-imposed imprisonment).
1923 & '24		Baba's pravachans, i.e., sermons published in a periodical "Sai Vak Sudha" (Mahrathi).
1924—1925		Visits Nasik, Triambak, etc.
1929—1932		Great increase in Baba's popularity; new buildings built at Sakuri. Biographics and his works published in different vernaculars.
Nov. 1932		Five ladies have "Tulasi-vivaha" with Krishna held in Baba's hand. Great

	sensation and powerful newspaper propaganda. Decline in popularity begins.
1934	Bhangre-Divekar case and public examination of Sri Baba and Sati Godavaribai.
,,	Bambay Deva Dasi Act passed.
1935	Baba marries 2 Kanyas himself, (spiritual union) and is charged with offence under B. D. Act, convicted in first Court and acquitted on appeal.
1935—1937	Baba marries (spiritual union) six more young ladies.
1936—37 (onwards) }	Baba starts performing Yagnya Yagas and other Satkriyas with the Kanyas for the welfare of his devotees and the world.
Feb. 1939	Shri Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath visits Sakuri.
April 1939	Baba gives Sanyasa to his mother aged about 90.
May 1939	Baba's mother breathed her last and a temple erected on her Samadhi a few months later.
About the end of 1940 }	Baba lays down definite instructions for the future working of his Kanya-Kumari Sthan at Sakuri.
,,	Baba goes on dropping various hints re. casting off his mortal coil.
Dec. 1940	Baba's last visit to Benares.

Jan. 1941	Baba performs his last memorable Surya-Yag with Kanyas, dressed in female attire.
Feb. 1941	Baba's last visit to Surat.
26-4-1941	Fresh and clear hints by Baba about his so-called 'Transfer' shortly.
24-11-1941	Baba's last visit to Hyderabad via Sholapur. He foretells that he 'will wind up everything within a month'.
12-12-1941	Baba's last visit to Poona; conveys his prostrations to Shri Narayan Maharaj of Kedgaon through a devotee.
Dec. 1941	Baba visits Alandi to pay his last homage to the Samadhi of Shri Jnaneshwar Maharaj.
19-12-1941	Baba returns to Sakuri from Poona.
20th & 21st Dec. 1941	Baba gives Darshana to his devotees as usual at Sakuri.
22-12-1941	Baba visits Satana (his birth place) for the last time and instals there twelve Jyotirlingas with his own hands—his last great work.
23-12-1941	Baba returns to Sakuri from Satana.
24-12-1941	Baba takes Mahasamadhi at Sakuri in the morning to the great surprise and

bewilderment of his devotees. (Xmas eve).

25-12-1941 Baba's body finally deposited in the Samadhi just in front of his Pinjra (Xmas day).

13-1-1942 Baba's marble image installed in the Pinjra and his Padukas outside it.

14-1-1943 Shri Datta's marble image installed in front of Baba and Sai Baba's photos in the Datta temple.

APPENDICES

No. 1

SRI UPASANI VAKSUDHA—PART I

CHAPTER III

Pages 49 to 52

Salvation Through Women

[*Translated by Mr. Balakistna Ragunath Bhat*, *B.A.* (*Hons*).]

In the preceding chapter we have discussed about *Viyogabhyas*. Now for men who have to remain engaged in worldly pursuits, there is another method (of achieving liberation) *viz.*, to marry and thereby to attain the benefit of *Viyogabhyas*, automatically, through the instrumentality of women.

Man, due to many desires, indulges in varieties of actions, and goes on rendering the soul more and more impure, and thereby through the *Karma-Prarabdha* (Destiny) formed by those actions acquires or fosters more and more of individuality or egotism. *Viyogabhyas* of the *Karma-Prarabdha* (Destiny) which means the destruction of *Karma* takes place through woman. For, by the design of God, woman possesses no requisite qualities by nature suitable to undertake all sorts of transactions in the world by which she can go on adding to her *Karma-Prarabdha*; nor should such qualities be in her. Woman, by nature, has no independence; she should depend on her *Sadachar-sampanna* husband. Against the wishes of such a husband, she should not act according to her own will in any way, is the dictum of our (Hindu) Dharma. The reason for this dictum is that man should engage himself in *Kriyakartritwa Vyawahar* (*i.e.*, worldly transactions done with an idea of being the responsible agent of the action) while woman should be free from them. She should carry on the house-hold duties in accordance with the *Stree Dharma* only to the extent that is needed for *Pati-seva* (*i.e.*, serving her husband) and for maintaining their bodies (*i e.*, their *Sharira-rakshana.*)

By performing such sort of house-hold duties, no *Prarabdha* (Destiny) is created. Since women by nature are not meant for other-worldly affairs, they remain always free from *Karma-Prarabdha*; they must remain in that state, and men should also keep them in the self-same condition If they remain in that state, the *Karma-dosha* (*i.e* , the evil effects of action, Karmic effects) of their husbands will be destroyed (automatically) through those women. In short, woman is responsible for the extinction of *Karma-Prarabdha* of her husband. As women by nature and by Divine Ordination are free from *Kriyakartritwa Vyawahar* they are not affected by the effects of *Karma-Prarabdha* of their husbands. For, woman is meant to wipe out *Karma* of her husband. When the husband is freed from *Prarabdha* (Destiny), then alone he attains Godliness.

Women need eternal *Sowbhagya* (*i.e.*, a state of being free from widowhood). Eternal *Sowbhagya* depends on husband's immortality; and till husband attains Godliness (Divinity) immortality is impossible; and the husband does not achieve Divinity, till he gets free from *Karma-Prarabdha*. Therefore, for their eternal *Sowbhagya*, women have to free their husbands from the bonds of their *Karma-Prarabdha*; and for that reason women in turn have to remain aloof from transactions involving *Kriyakartritwa* which creates *Prarabdha* (Destiny). No *Prarabhdha* therefore is created for women. By Divine Ordination it is not in the nature of women to do any acts involving *Kriyakartritwa* *i.e.*, acts done with a feeling that they are the responsible agents, and so they have no *Prarabdha*. No *Prarabdha* is created unless one does an act with a feeling of independence and responsibility. It is a well established truth that non-creation of *Prarabdha* for women means the development of natural Divine Power which they possess in themselves, and because of it, not only are they not bound down by anyone's *Prarabdha* but the *Prarabdha* of their husbands and elders is also destroyed automotically; and they too attain Divine Power. Therefore, in order to preserve the natural Satvic qualities inherent in women, men should keep them always aloof from all acts or transactions which create *Prarabdha* (*i.e.*, Destiny).

What do you mean by saying that women should do *Pati-Seva*? *Sevan* means to eat or absorb. So *Pati-Seva* means eating up or absorbing the *Karma-Dosh* (i. *e*., evil effects of Karma or Karmic effects) of their husbands; in other words, it means the extinction of the *Karma-Prarabdha* of their husbands. Since women are meant to take the burden of men's *Karma-Dosh*, that Dosh does not effect them. Just in the same manner as the Ganges is meant to cleanse away the sins of the people; but those sins do not affect the Ganges; the Ganges remains purest of the pure. Similarly through the instrumentality of woman who are free from *Prarabdha*, men's *Prarabdha* also gets extinct or destroyed without any effort; hence it does not affect women in any way. They remain pure like the Ganges. By the *Darshan* (sight) of such *Prarabdha-Rahit* women, the world also gets purified. Those who possess such women, get the benefits of *Viyogabhyas* of *Karma-Prarabdha*; in other words, get themselves freed or liberated from *Karma-Prarhbdha* through such women and attain the state of *Prarabdha-Rahit* (Godliness), and thereby they achieve immortality, and women in turn attain the eternal *Sowbhagya* (i. e., a state of being free from widowhood).

Notes:

Viyogabhyas means disentangling oneself from. (*Viyog* means separation; *Abhyas* means study.)

Karma-Prarabdha means the effects, good or bad, of the acts ripe for enjoyment. (*Karma* means acts and *Prarabdha* means accumulation of their effects ripe for enjoyment, i. e. Destiny.)

Sadachar Sampanna means behaving according to the rules of Dharma or conduct which takes us to *Sat*, i.e., Godward. *Achar* means behaviour; *Sat* means God-State, *Sampanna* means possessing.)

Kriyakartritwa Vyawahar means worldly transactions done with the feeling of one being the responsible agent of the action. (*Vyawahar* means worldly pursuits; *Kriyakartritwa* means feeling of independence and being the responsible agent of action.)

Stree Dharma means rules of conduct specially meant for woman. (*Stree* means woman, *Dharma* means rules of conduct.)

Pati-Seva means service of the husband. (*Pati* means husband; *Seva* means service.)

Sharir-Rakshan means protection of body. (*Sharir* means body; *Rakshan* means protection.)

Karma Dosh means evil effects of Karma, i.e., action. (*Karma* means action; *Dosh* means evil effects.)

Sowbhagya means state of being free from widowhood.

No. 2

UPASANI VAKSUDHA—PART I

CHAPTER VIII

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To be free from Karma-Prarabdha, i.e , Destiny is the essence of Brahmin's Dharma

[*Translated by Mr. Balakistna Ragunath Bhat. B.A.* (*Hons*).]

Now remains the Brahmin class (to be dealt with). Since time immemorial it is one which adopted or accepted the *San–Marga* as well as the way of achieving *Brahma-Dhyana* and since it is one which acts according to them in word and deed, it is impossible that it should form or create *Prarabdha* (which for want of better term we call Destiny) for itself. All the ways and deeds of Brahmins from ancient times are meant for the extinction of others' *Prarabdha*. Hence the Brahmins of yore were always in the *Prarabdha-Rahit* state, (i.e., a state of being free from Destiny). Since all their Brahminic ceremonies or activities have been in the *Prarabdha-Rahit* state, they were enjoying the Divine Bliss or *Brahma.Pada*. So how would they form *Prarabdha* which would make them suffer misery and hardships in this world? To be free from *Prarabdha* is the essence of Brahmin Dharma. As those Brahmins, men and women, were staying in jungles and were clothing themselves with coarse fibre garments (*Valkala*), there was no system of *Purdha* for those women from the very beginning. Their custom was to remain in ordinary coarse cloth or cloth made of fibres. So, where would be *Purdha* in such a system? Their state of mind was always *Satvic* and pure, and they were always *Pativrata-Parayan*, (*i. e.*, they had great devotion for their husbands and they were chaste and faithful to them), and so there was no necessity of *Purdha* for them, and no *Prarabdha* was created by them.

In modern times the majority of the Brahmins have laid aside their *Satvic* and other activities which would free them from *Prarabdha* and have started doing acts of Rajo-Guna which help to create and increase their *Prarabdha*. Hence the Brahmins are getting entangled in *Prarabdha* in a variety of ways. This is, by all means, a great blunder on the part of the Brahmins of today. Those who were the ancestors of the Brahmins spent their lives either as Rishis, Munis or Brahma-Swarup. Thereby they became worthy of real Divine Happiness. Being the Descendants of those *Rishis*, what is there that is more scandalous for us than to behave without any check, leaving aside our *Swadharma*, a sort of behaviour which is but a darkest blot on our great ancestors? On account of the behaviour of our present-day Brahmins, the curse of our ancient Rishis is bound to descend on us and it will not stop without bringing a terrible catastrophe on these scandalous Brahmins. Having found out therefore that we are on the wrong tract, on wise consideration, it is best to correct ourselves and our children from now, in order to become like our ancestors. But on account of sheer foolishness, if some of the Brahmins and other persons like Brahmins persist in the wrong track and involve themselves in activities full of Rajo-Guna which create *Prarabdha*, is it not necessary for them for the destruction of their *Prarabha* to keep their wives without independence and away from worldly transactions, in order to be free from *Prarabdha*, like the wives of Rajas or the members of the royal family, or businessmen like Kshatriyas and Vaishyas? On the contrary, if they are given independence and are allowed to carry on the *Karma-Vyawahara* like men, what course is left for them both, man and wife, but to create *Prarabdha* and to revolve in the cycle of births and deaths in order to enjoy that

Prarabdha and undergo Hell-like miseries? If the Brahmins, who have lost the right path, were to desert the side of *Satkarma* by which they could remain free from *Prarabdha* by following the ancient Satvic conduct, and were to accept the Rajasic activities of the world, then they must, on the other side, keep their women away from independence and free from all worldly transactions.

Notes:—

San-Marga means good path. (*Marga* means path, *Sat* means good.)

Brahma-Dyan means Knowledge of Brahman. *i.e.*, the highest the Omnipresence, the Omnipotent.

Brahma-Pada means state of Brahman. (*Pada* means state, place.)

Valkala means bark of a tree.

Purdha means Gosha.

Pativrata-Parayan means engrossed in the service of the husband and faithful to him, *i.e.*, chaste;

Swadharma means Dharma of oneself, *i.e.*, duty of oneself.

No. 3

Horoscope of Sri Kashinath Govind Upasani Sastri (Baba Maharaj), Brahmin

On 16-5-1870, i.e., Krishna Paksha Dwitiya, of the year Pramodhuta, Risbha month, in Dhanur lagna, when the moon was under the constellation Anuradha, at 38 Naligais 8 seconds, at night, a male child was born at Satana (in the Nasik Dt., Bombay Presidency) to Govind Sastri.

(12) Venus शुक्र	(1) Mars अंगारक	(2) Sun Mercury Jupiter रवि, बु, गु.	(3)
(11)	Rasi Chakra		(4) Rahu राहु
(10) Kethu केतु			(5)
(9) Saturn शनि	(8) Moon चंद्र	(7)	(6)

No 4

EXPERIENCES OF DEVOTEES

27th July 1934, Sakuri

Ardeshir Shroff, aged about 35, Salesman, etc., Princess Street' Bombay, says:—

"This is my first visit to Sri Upasani Baba. I was induced to go over in this way. I have twins aged 18 months. A fortnight back, one of them was suddenly seized with lobular pneumonia. The doctor in attendance could not give me any hopes. For 3 days, I was feeling so wretched, nursing and nursing the child, declining to take food even. The doctor feared that the 9th or 10th day would prove a critical day and simply said," Go on nursing." Seeing my afflicted condition, Mrs. Dubash, my landlady, told me that the *udhi* of Sri Baba would effect a cure. So my wife began to use it. To the great surprise of the doctor, the fever camedown rapidly on the 4th day of using the *udhi* and in 2 or 3 days, the child picked up enough strength to enable me to start off to Sakuri to pay my respects to Baba.

The difficulty a Parsi may occasionally feel in going to Baba is the shyness or shame one feels to go to a man of a different religion to help. But Baba has himself given the answer to this doubt. "Each man should stick to his own faith," says he. "But you must get into contact with a *Satpurusha* (who may be found in any religion). If you do not find one in your own faith, but only in another faith, follow him; and he will help you without hurting your own religion."

No 5

26th July 1934, Sakuri

Ganesh Govind Keskar, L. C. P. S. (Bombay), Doctor, Shahada, (West Kandesh), says:—

Baba was saying to us in 1917 on "Kanyadan" what is found in Upasani Vaksuda on the subject. His discourse to us at Kharagpur was often in praise of humility. "Be humble always. Then God will exalt your position" is what he frequently said.

When he was at Sindhi, many devotees would be wanting to leave him, to go and catch the train at the station half a mile off. When the train was late, he knew of it by his own inscrutable power and informed the devotees that there was plenty of time yet. This was invariably found to be correct when the devotees reached the station.

No 6.

26th July 1934

Narayan Ganesh Abhayankar, Inspector of Co-operative Societies, Bongrar Co-operative Bank, Nandurbar, (B. B. & C. I., Tapti Valley Ry.), says:—

I learnt of Baba from Dr. Keskar of Shahada and accompanied him—without any clear faith in Baba but more for the doctor's company, a little out of curiosity and a little to ease my heart's pain at the loss of a pretty and clever 5 months old child. This was in 1931. When I saw Baba's lustrous face here, I began to develop faith in him. It grew. Thereafter, I have come up here several times. Baba comes to me frequently in my morning dreams. When I was feeling disgusted with service at Sind Kheda to the point of considering whether I should kick up Provincial Co-operative Service, Baba appeared one morning in my dream and said: "You think of resigning your place in disgust! I am arranging to get you a good place". About 8 days after that, I was posted to Nandurbar, a specially good place, coveted by so many in the service (to which a non-Guzerati like myself would not ordinarily be posted).

Once my two children had fever. On the third day one boy's temperature mounted up to 105°. I kept on applying Baba's *udhi* and did not consult a doctor. The third night, that boy was crying out as if in delirium, "a big* man is troubling me." The fourth day both the boys' temperature fell considerably and they recovered. On another occasion one of my boys was ill and recovered with the use of Baba's *udhi* only.

I frequently get Baba in my dreams and I asked him one day when I went to him and saw him at his residence why he came in my dreams. He said he did not move out at all. "There must be a *Rinanubhanda*** between us", he said, to account for the dream visits." I wanted to ask Baba last year what use there was in going on doing *sandhya*, etc. I had stopped it (i. e., *sandhya*) then and attended only to informal devotion. On the day of my arrival, Baba addressing the assembly said, "Your father was doing '*trikala snan and sandhya*. Was he a fool to do that? Why do you give it up?" etc. I found this an answer to my unuttered question as my father was doing *trikala snan and sandhya*"; and since then I am performing "*sandhya*" regularly.

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* Baba's figure is big and burly.

** Rinanubhanda means pre-natal obligation,

No 7

28TH JULY 1934, SAKURI

Motabhoy Nowroji, Contractor, aged 45, Bombay Municipal Corporation, Market Dept., 13, Rustambag, Mazagaon P.O., Bombay, says;—

The first time I saw Baba was at Valkeshwar (Bombay) where he was seated on a balcony with immense crowds going to him to take *darshan*. My legs are unsound and with them I had trudged on a very long distance. On the way upstairs, it looked as though the crowd with Baba consisting of ladies, gentlemen, etc., would never clear off to give me a chance. A Moslem with a torn coat and a cloth tied up over his skull (just like Sai Baba) took me with him somehow straight to Baba. Baba pressed my head and patted me on the back and said: "You now understand." I did not understand what he ment, but was happy.

Next, I went and saw Uran Baba, a few months later. He asked me, "You have seen Upasani Baba—have you?" "He is a' *Satpurusha*— nay, the (Sardar) chief of *Satpurushas*. You must see him. When you go there, he will give you a figure. If he tells you a figure and you do not understand it, come to me."

In December following, we (i. e., I and four friends) were to go to Sakuri and see him. I had brought fruits and flowers, etc. in a basket and was arranging them on the lid of the basket to present them to him. Meanwhile he got angry with a boy, and kicked off the basket of fruits. I went away wondering what my guilt or offence was. My use of snuff I thought might be my sin and from that day forward, I am not using snuff. Soon ofter our expulsion, Baba sent word through Byramji calling me again to him and I went. Baba said, "This is Saturday, *Shani* (i.e., Saturn) has 7½ years of evil influence. So, as you have come to me on a Saturday, the trouble *Shani* gives to you I bear on myself. It will all go well with you. And he blessed me, patting me. Then he asked me, "*Shani*'s 7½ multiplied by 4—What is the result?" I said "30". Again he said, "What is 4 times 4?" I said "16". "Adding the two, what is it?" he asked. I said "46". Then he said, "That is it." I asked what it signified. "You will know it in due time," was all he said. Uran Baba's statement that Upasani Baba would give me a figure proved true. Baba gives figures not for betting or gaming but with a spiritual significance. I failed, for years, to go to Uran Baba and got no explanation.

Baba told me that he had known me from my previous births—for a long time, and that he was drawing me on to him.

I next got leave in April 1928 to go to Sakuri from my office. But my parents were angry that I should go to Sakuri then. After much persuasion, they permitted me to go. When I arrived at Sakuri and went to the Pinjra, Baba rebuked others for rushing to the Pinjra before me. He said: "I know what each of you is doing. You rush now to the Pinjra after wasting your time in chit-chat—without prayer, bhajan, etc." Again he said addressing the audience generally, "People also should not come here angering their fathers by coming here. One's first duty is towards one's parents. They must be honoured as God is honoured." I noticed this reference to my father's objections and anger when I started—which Baba must have discovered by his own power. But later, Baba added: "You have to obey now and not come here when your parents forbid you. A time will come when they will themselves push you towards this place."

This proved an accurate prophecy. In 1928-29, when Baba was to instal Datta at the Datta temple over his grandfather's tomb at Satana, 2 or 3 letters inviting me to Satana reached me and I put them aside on the table as I was not free to go, by reason of my father's views. But seeing these letters, my father himself asked me to go to Satana and I did. At Satana, when I wanted to go back after the first day, Baba said, "Take (*khana*) food and go." "Yes, I took your food," said I. "No, that is not it. Stay and take the other food I will give you." I stayed, and found he was to give me not the "meat that perisheth but that meat which endureth to everlasting life." Baba gave me spiritual instruction telling me how to see my Zorathustra.

Again, when there was a vacancy in the market department of the municipaiity, I asked Baba if I may try for it. Baba said, "Try. You will get it". I tried and applied; but a Pathan was given the place. I came and told Baba that I failed. "No, you will get it," said Baba. "But the place has been filled by a Mohamedan" said I. "He is only holding it for you. You will get it," said Baba. Wonderful was the fulfilment of the prediction. The Mohamedan was in a short time charged with misdeeds and convicted and I was told I was appointed. By next Sankaranti, I came and thanked Baba for the gift of the place. "No, the trouble is not over. You will have to make special effort to get it," he said. I went back and found that the Commissioner wanted to give the place to a man from another department. So I went to a relation or friend who took me to a man in high position and it was the letter (recommendation) of that gentleman that finally prevailed and got me that place.

As to the Muslim with torn coat and with a cloth tied like a skull cap over his head, I again and again had his help. On one occasion, we were trying to get back to Bombay from here (Sakuri) and so tried to get into a compartment at Chitali. The soldiers in the compartment banged the door against us—so that Minu's sister who was with us was about to fall down. There was no place. The guard who was seeing everything came up and threatened to report against the soldiers and cleared two compartments for us. That guard, though a European, appeared to me to be wearing the skull cloth and torn coat I referred to above. This was **Sai Baba's help**, a third or fourth time—I believe.

No 8

26TH JULY 1934

Kaaya Dhav, an esteemed mofussil merchant, says:—

I heard of Sri Upasani Baba from a friend and so came and saw Baba at Sakuri for the first time in 1923. Then Baba asked me, "What is your income ?"

I :—"My income, which comes to me from rents, etc. i.e. without any effort on my part, is Rs. 500 or 600 a month.

Baba :—What are you going to do with all that? For a devotee, such a large income is not necessary. 50 or 60 rupees would suffice for one's need. You may spend the rest on charity and come and live here."

I :—"If I get a thousand a month, I will come and stay here."

Baba laughed and said, "you are immature yet, do not fear. Everything will come alright."

Later my income rose to a thousand a month. But I had no intention of stopping with that, or going to stay at Sakuri thenceforward. The more money I got, the more still I was anxious to get. Passion for money was growing upon me, I saw, but I did not mind it, as steady increase of success in business absorbed my attention. In 1932 I had serious loss. My stock suddenly depreciated and I lost 3 lakhs of rupees. In sorrow I came to Sakuri. Baba on seeing me shed tears of sympathy. Afterwards he told me: "I have brought you to this (painful) pass. Once you come to me, I am responsible for your welfare. Your success in business hampered your prospects of eternal bliss. So I was obliged to do this. You must make the best use now of your adversity. By one man's (i.e., your) incurring a present monetary loss, thousands will derive future spiritual benefit."

In 1925, I was with Baba at Sakuri for some weeks. Towards the end of that period, an incident happened at home in my village, which I learned from my wife (who was on the spot witnessing the event), when I went there some 3 days after the event. There is a well there without a parapet wall. My daughter, aged 4, was playing with my cousin's son, S, a boy aged 5; and none else was near. Suddenly the boy pushed the girl into the well and ran away. Some one from a distance noticed the incident and ran up to my house to give information. It took some time for the inmates to get the information and next, to get a man to climb down the well. It might well have been 10 to 15 minutes after the child dropped in. The first man that got down and dived into the water came up without the child. Then another got down and got to the bottom of the well and fetched her up. The water was 18 feet deep and its surface was 20 feet below ground level. The well was 2 feet square. The child had not a single scratch. It had not got suffocated nor filled its stomach, mouth and nostrils with water. Soon after it came up to the surface of the water, even before getting out of the well, the child said, "S pushed me in." The miraculous escape unhurt from drowning can only be due to the miraculous powers of Sri Baba which he wielded on my behalf. I never mentioned that incident to him nor any other incident disclosing his miraculous powers exerted on my behalf. He informs people who report such help—"It is your *poorva punya* (i.e.. past good works) that makes God help you thus," claiming no credit for the help, not even admitting it.

I had a little child six years ago. When he was one year old, we brought him to Sakuri and he sat for a while on Baba's lap. We went back with the child to our village. Six months later he had an attack of pneumonia and high fever. At 3 A. M my mother asked the child, "Shall I give you milk?" And milk was brought; the child sat up and drank 2 or 3 spoonfuls and then in the seated posture told me, "Bhau, Baba (is) (pointing to the locket with Baba's portrait on its chest) and Baba (is) (pointing to the vacant space towards the wall where there was no picture or portrait). Then at once he fell, or leaned back on his mother's breast and expired. A one-year-old child could not have known or remembered about Baba at the Sakuri visit and his recalling and seeing Baba at the last moment was most wonderful and was evidently the result of Baba's grace.*

In 1924-25, Baba was lecturing 4 or 5 hours at a stretch every day for some days on the subject *Brahama Satyam-Jagan Mithya*, etc. (which means that all phenomena are unreal and that the underlying Brahman alone is real). I listened to him as others did. As various doubts arose amongst and were expressed by the listeners he used to clear their doubts. But so far as I was concerned, I did not mention my doubts. The most perplexing and unacceptable feature of the teaching appeared to me this. I am listening and Baba is teaching: and these are phenomena. In order that he should teach and I learn anything, these phenomena are essential prerequisites. What is the good of a preaching which denies and annuls the very foundation on which it rests? (It is like a wood-cutter hacking away at the stem on which he sits, below him, so that if he cuts fully, he will fall and die.) I went home and in the calm solitude of the evening I went into my chamiana in the garden and was meditating. Suddenly, Baba's figure appeared before me and he spoke thus:

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*Cf. Bhag. Gita VIII. 5. 6, showing that one goes to God if he thinks of Him in his last moments. The dying soul becomes what it last thinks of.

"I have nothing to gain by telling you untruth. Besides the sack cloth I wear, I have no need. Why should I tell you anything which is not true?" But I had my doubts yet. Then he said, "To clear your doubt, I shall give you *Anubhava*—a bit of experience or personal realisation." He then placed his big toe on my chest. That had a wonderful effect. The various objects in the world, e. g., garden, Sakuri, friends, etc., all came whirling towards me, entered into my eyes and were lost. Thus in succession, all things of the universe and finally Baba's figure came whirling and disappeared into my eyes. Then I felt a blissful restfulness. How long this continued I could not and cannot tell. I had no reckoning of time in that state. Then I was just wishing that that bliss should become permanent. Simultaneously with the wish, Baba withdrew his foot and object after object emerged into my field of vision. And in a moment, Baba disappeared and all my surroundings were just what they were before I started meditation—i. e., before this vision came in.

By Baba's grace, I had got more and more devoted to him—giving up all other worship or religious exercise. Whenever I intensely thought of him, he would appear before me. I had obtained his grace and was happy in that.

About 1927, my sister wanted me to take her to Pandharpur to see Pandarinath. As a two-year-old baby, I had been there and had no recollection of the place. I agreed to go with her a month later. Meanwhile I had a dream or vision as I lay in my village. I saw suddenly that I was at Pandarpur and at the temple. Vitoba was in the form of an image—standing all alone in his temple without Rukhumai. I wondered where the mother Rukhumai was. I was taken up the terrace over Vithal's temple and saw other temples,—of Rukhumai and others. Then after being brought down, as I gazed at Vithal's figure, Vithal began to extend His leg for me to take darshan (just as Baba does). I bowed and placed my forehead on Vithal's foot, wondering how a stone image could extend its leg. The next and third wonder was that Vithoba's lips of stone were moving, as though He was about to speak and the fourth wonder was that as I reverently withdrew backwards from him, a figure moved out of the stone image and came to me and spoke thus:

Vittoba:—I have given you into the care of the speaking and moving God. Why have you come to the stone image?

I understood at once that the speaking and moving God referred to was Sri Upasani Baba.

"Anyhow I am here," said I. "Please give me your blessing."

Vittoba:—Observe Ekadasi.

1:—I am already observing it.

Vittoba:—That is not enough. Starve your ten indriyas, i.e., senses; place the eleventh, the mind, at my feet. And I will hold it fast.

Just then, some pretty dogs were licking my feet. I got angry at that and picking up one threw it with force on the grouud; but it remained unhurt.

Vittoba:—You see it does not die, These are *Vishayas*, sense objects. It is no use getting angry with them. Destroy them with *Jnana*, i. e., the illumined mind.

When I went to Pandharpur, the temple was exactly as I had seen it in my dream.

About the end of 1926 or the beginning of 1926, I was going on with my dhyana, meditation, in my village. Suddenly a huge black circle appeared in front of me and thence a voice issued telling me: "I have come here. I am going to take you away. Are you ready?" I asked, "Who are you?" The voice replied, "I am Yama" (i. e., God of Death). I defiantly challenged him to touch me. "You can take away the body," said I, "but me, you cannot touch. You are welcome to take away the body. I am quite content". The voice ceased but the black circle continued. I woke. I had no fear. I expected death instantly. But my mind was at peace. I began to meditate on Baba. As usual 1 expected him to appear at once. But this time in spite of my repeated efforts, he failed to appear. I got angry and abused him for deserting me at that late moment. Soon afterwards, the black circle had bright white lines or circles added at its outer fringe. From that bright disk a voice issued, "You are spared this time. 1 will come for you a month later."

A month after that incident was Sankaranthi or an Eclipse and I was then at Sakuri. Here I had exposed myself to rain, wet, cold breeze, etc., and developed fever and double pneumonia. Dr. Gogte, of Nagpur, and others attended on me. 1 grew worse, staying at the small shop in the outer corner of Datta Mandir. I began to rave. My temperature was high. A lady went and reported my state to Baba. Baba said, "Let him keep quiet and sit. Everything will be alright." The lady came and reported Baba's message to me. In a few hours thereafter, i.e., about 4 A M., I felt quite healthy and happy, I sat up. Doctor and friends said, "Lie down". But as my health had improved, I impatiently waited for 8 A.M., the darshan time. Then leaning on some one I went and had darshan of Baba. Baba was furious and said, "Did I not order you to stay in bed—and to keep quiet?" But I pleaded ignorance of the exact terms of his order. He then smiled and bade Mrs. Durgabai Karmarkar give me some black pills and told me to eat as much as I could of rice with pepper water, and to take the pills. I followed his directions and in three days I was in good health.

No. 9

30TH JULY 1934.

Prasanna Kumar Gajanan Rao Raje, aged 26, says:—

I came to see Baba in 1927 at Sakuri on the advice of my uncle Raje, Inspector of Police at Bombay. Baba was again visited by me in 1928. I was an electrical contractor doing business at Nagpur. Baba seeing me in 1921 March—3 P.M., just after Arti said: "Why do you waste time here? Go away at once. Business is waiting for you at Nagpur. Attend to your business and then come here." I had intended to stay at Sakuri for two or three days. But Baba's order to leave was peremptory. So, I started at once at 3 P m., and went to Nagpur by train. My friends were waiting for me at the station and were glad to see me. They presumed I had got the wire they sent me to my Bombay address asking me to go over to Nagpur to put in a tender for Rs. 5,000. The very day they sent the wire, Baba was telling me to start and so I came. The wire was not redirected to me at Sakuri or Kopargaon. There was a tender for electric work. The last day for tendering was the day after I reached Nagpur. So I was just in time. The next day when my tender also was opened, there was some debate in the municipal council if my tender or another's should be accepted. It was put off till the next day I got the order to come and sign the contract in the municipal office.

In June 1934, i.e., last month, Baba came to my uncle's house at Bombay. I had then pains in all my joints and could not extend my limbs. I had fever also. I did not care to go to doctors or the hospital. Baba gave me his *udhi* and said, by applying it daily to my forehead and swallowing a bit every day, I would get alright. In 15 days' time, by use of *udhi* alone, I got all right.

No 10

Gopal Pandarinath Alulkar, aged 33, employed in the Military Accounts Association as clerk, 321, Sukrawarpet, Poona, says:—

I saw Sri Upasani Baba first in 1925. He merely asked me what I was, my name, gotra, pravara, etc., —just a few words. I went to him having read his biography. Eight days after I saw him, I got married. That was sudden and not thought of even, when I was going to him. I got on with worldly prosperity, drawing a salary of Rs. 90 in the Military Accounts, till 1929. I was frequently visiting Baba. He was often appearing in my dreams. In 1928, myself and a friend came to Sakuri. Baba in addressing us at the Zopdi said; "A pure chaste life without sex enjoyment is excellent",—alike from the worldly and the spiritual stand-point. I was keeping always poor health.

In 1929 a change began in my circumstances. First I lost my Government service. That meant financial difficulties were beginning to oppress me. In

1931, my wife was pregnant. When she was six months with child, I came with a friend to Sakuri. When we two were present, Baba was talking of 'wife's death'. We, two friends, thought this might apply to either of us. But my wife was not ill, I apprehended no evil for her. Two months later, she was having premature labour and got ill. On a Monday, she got unconscious. I applied Baba's *udhi* and tirtha to her. Four hours later, she became conscious. She then said that she had just gone away as Baba called her, that she was not to remain in life and that she would go away to Baba. (She had accompanied me for some of my visits to Sakuri and had great faith in Baba). On the Friday following that Monday, she died. Six months after her death, I went to Sakuri, thinking that I should ask Baba what special rites or observances I must undertake to give her *Sadgati*.* Baba was inside the Zopdi and I was thinking about this, standing at a little distance outside the Zopdi. Baba spoke, as though addressing some one else, "When the relations of any of the devotees die, they (the deceased) go to me and come here straight. There is no necessity to have any special *kriya* (observance) in their case." This was an answer to my unuttered question and I did not put any question to Baba. Then I went in and bowed. Baba said, "Now, all evil is gone. There will be no trouble hereafter." The weak health and constant sickness I had before stopped. Since my wife's death I am in sound health.

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* Sadgati means a happy state after death,

In 1931, I got into private service as a clerk of Military Accounts Association.

Baba gives me correct information in dreams.

No 11

24TH MARCH 1934, SAKURI.

Mr. Moozamdar says:—

About Sivaratri last, one night at 11 P.M. in my room, myself and P. were talking together; and he was abusing Baba. I was quietly replying to him that Baba was not a bad man but a *Satpurusha*, and that he would not do what was wrong. Next day, at the time that I took *naivedya*, i.e., food to the Zopdi, Baba was there and he quietly told me, "I am not a bad man". This struck me as a reference to what I said practically in the same words to P.

Another experience of Baba's knowing what is said or done elsewhere is this. I intended to do a meritorious work and mentioned the fact to another. Next day at the pravachan, Baba addressed the assembly and then said, "If you wish to do a *Satkarma* (meritorious work), do not mention it to another."

Yet another instance is this. A few weeks back, I mentioned to the Marwadi gentleman who was inviting Baba to Calcutta and Kasi that I also wished to go to Kasi. In the next day's pravachan, Baba said, "Why go to Kasi ? After Kasi comes Nasik." On "Nasik" he played a pun ; literally it means "No-learn," "learn to say no" to all your cravings.

He rebuked Mr. Damle a few weeks back at the Arati when he earnestly implored Baba to save his (Damle's) wife. In that rebuke, he said, "You do not know the state of this (i,e., Baba's) personality. We are daily dealing with Gods. We have to look after worlds." Baba has evidently achieved that result of yoga, which penetrates through all thoughts and things.

No 12

Rustumji Jamshetji, a Parsi resident of Bombay says:—

I had been suffering from a very horrible and painful optical disease and was under the treatment of the most eminent optical surgeons for a long time. They tried their utmost but the eye resisted their attempts; subsequently, various injections were tried in the eye and on the body with a drastic medical treatment which shattered my nerves.

At Guru Poornima, when Sri Upasani Baba arrived in Sakuri after his critical illness at Nasik, I went there to stay for four days. Sri Baba who is an ocean of love and mercy, took pity on my condition and kept me there. After eight months, the disease subsided completely and after a further period of eight months the eye though damaged, recovered.

When I returned to Bombay and consulted the optical surgeon for a pair of specticles, they were amazed to find the improvement in the eye. One of them who is a leading practitioner in Bombay frankly confessed that there is no special treatment for the disease contracted by me and all that western science can do is to experiment to retard it and that many patients lose their eye after suffering horrible pain for a long time.

No. 13

D. N. V., Clerk, in a Bank at Bombay now at Sakuri, says:—

My brother, Vallabh, told me of Sri Upasani Maharaj, after reading Nath Madhao Maharaj's book about Baba. He had Pthysis for three months and then came to Sakuri to get the benefit of Sri Baba's darshan. I accompanied him—that was in 1923. Next year, i.e., in 1924, he died. When we came here, he heard Baba's pravachans stating that people should not go to Baba for earthly remedies. In 1923, I was impressed by Baba's lectures. I concluded therefore, he had an extraordinary knowledge of everything. So I continued to visit Sakuri often. What specially strikes me in his lectures is—How are we to behave in this world? His, "जसे असेल तसे" was the foremost. "Don't grumble. Bear all cheerfully. Do not trouble others for your own sake. Try as far as possible to avoid getting entangled in the meshes of Maya." This was the gist of his advice. I am a bachelor and his advice is that one should stick to Brahmacharya. This advice was first given to me as a part of the general lecture given to all. But during the last two years, he has specially talked to me on the subject. He showed me that by Brahmacharya, I cut off the further development of Samsara and Maya and that by the contrary course I would get deeper into Maya.

One thing specially contributed to my impression of Baba in 1923. A man possessed by an evil spirit went round to numerous holy places to get rid of it—but in vain. He came to Sakuri and at noon arati, his head touched Baba's foot and at once he jumped up quivering and dancing and then shrieked *Sadguru-Soda* which means that the devil should be permitted to get away. He pulled out Baba's feet. Then he fell down senseless. For two or three days he was coming to Baba. The possession was getting less and less severe. He was from Nagpur or Kharagpur. This showed me Baba was a man of great power. I had many of such instances brought to my knowledge.

In 1933 September, I came here for "Pateti" holiday to stay only one day alleging sickness as an excuse for my absence from my office for the day after "Pateti". Then I wished to go back in time. Baba said, "Wait for a few days more." I told him I had no leave. He merely answered, "God is great." And I stayed on 24 days. I then wanted to start. Baba even then said, "Wait for some days more." I told him that the officer above me would drive me from office. He said "Your officer will not ask any question. If he asks, give him my *prasad* and he will be good to you." Still fearing the consequences of further delay, I started off. It was a Monday. Then I went to the office. The officer wanted no explanations, and asked for none; he did not even look at me. I did not give him Baba's prasad. So I concluded that by Baba's grace, I escaped trouble. Baba had asked me to stop here for some days and I did not. Just on the eighth day after I left Sakuri, I got typhoid fever at Bombay and suffered for nearly 3 months. This, I concluded, was an evil due to disobeying Baba's injunction to stay on at Sakuri,

No. 14

Dr. R. K. Kombarbail, L. M. & S., Doctor, Bombay at his residence Anandasram, says:—

I was in medical service in Madras and gave it up. I went over to Bombay and tried to start medical practice. Without adequate financial and social support, the attempt, as may be easily guessed, was not a success. The initial failure made me very much depressed. I tried to secure peace of mind by understanding the cause of my state and in fact the cause of everything. My religious enquiries led me mainly along the channels of Advaitic metaphysics and vedanta. Avadhuta Gita and Sri Sankara's Aparokshanubuthi gave me intellectual satisfaction as furnishing an explanation of the presence of evil, sorrow, of the pairs of opposites and of all things. It is the undifferentiated Brahman that manifests in these states and sorrow is the result of fixing attention with absorbed interest on each passing phase without at once recalling one's self (or personality) to the root cause; and the remedy for the evil is the firm fixing of the mind on the root cause and ignoring the passing pairs of opposites. In one word Samathva Yoga is the thing to be accomplished (as Bhagavat Gita repeatedly declares and stresses). However, as my notion of the Divine was practically *Nirakara* (at least in respect of my own practical attempts at religious realisation), i.e., formless and impersonal, my sadness and sorrow still continued in their intensity, and no peace of mind was achieved or appeared to be within easy reach. In such a state of mind, I learnt that Sri Upasani Baba was living at Sakuri, that he was a *Satpurusha*, i.e., a personal embodiment of the *Para Brahman* that forms the ultimate cause and support of all existence, the noumenon responsible for this Phenomenal world. That was early in 1923. In October 1923, I went up to Sakuri taking with me Mr. Gopal Rao (now a retired telegraphist) and leaving some money (Rs. 5) with my friend Mr. Sada Siva Rao, as a method of pressing him to go to Sakuri. When Mr. Siva Rao turned up at Sakuri, Baba spoke as though in general terms about money being needlessly spent in going to Sakuri while it could be profitably invested in making gold bangles for the wife. This clearly referred to the objections raised by Mrs. S. when she gave him the money for going to Sakuri. This clearly showed us that Baba is presest with us invisibly in our very hearts and that nothing is concealed from him, and impressed us. He is clearly a *Satpurusha*. Later, Baba asked each of us what induced us to visit him. I said I wished to get peace of mind, that my professional and financial position, etc., were such as to upset my peace of mind. He replied that my position would improve, that I would ultimately attain peace of mind in this very life; that, however, I would soon have bitter experiences to go through, that I should stick to the practice (Sadhana) I had already started and that when sorrows were getting intolerable I should write to him or at least *think of his figure* in my heart *and thus obtain relief from my sorrow.* Though I had not mentioned to him my Aparokshanubuthi study and Avadutha Gita study, he thus referred to them by the word practice (Sadhana). I went on developing that study. I, however, had the advantage from them of *Sakara Dhyan* (i.e., God with form). God had now begun to appear to me in the form of Baba and my faith in him increased and became firm. Though I did not write to him about my troubles, I have always thought of him especially during my trials and made appeals to him. Almost invariably these gave me relief. I shall mention some instances presently. My professional position has considerably improved since I saw him in 1923 and I have more than one place of business and have a wide (though not very lucrative) practice. In 1924, 1929 and 1927, I again went to him. In 1924 I stayed for over a week with him; later, I stayed six weeks with him in 1927. During my stay at Sakuri, I used to get absorbed in my contemplation or meditation and not mix much with people. I was getting to solve the problem of sorrow in my way. I felt that in every act and event the force responisble for the act or event was God and so there was nothing to complain of. On one occasion, I sat under the banyan tree in front (and outside) of Baba's "Zopdi" gate and was hurling away stones from me intently feeling within myself and even the force of throwing the stone, the law under which my hand and the stone moved were all the work of God. Baba was passing by me, but I did not note the fact. Baba as he passed by remarked, *Sarvam Eswararpanam* (everything is made over to God) and moved away rapidly, making my effort to get up and bow to him fruitless. I found that he had read my mind aright and confirmed my view that everything done or suffered should be attributed to God in order that peace of mind and bliss should be achieved.

Baba was kind enough to give us directions. They would often be clothed in general terms and Baba would not even look at the concerned person as he would pour out his advice in the midst of his lecture (*pravachan*) or advice to all that were present. The concerned person, if watchful, could see at once that the advice was clearly for him. I give some instances.

When myself and my friends saw at Sakuri that even the officiating priest covered himself up at the dawn *arati*, we did the same. That day Baba said "What is the good of giving advice and of studying, if one will not act upto the advice or the effect of what one is reading. I am not going to give any more advice." I found that he was referring to our covering ourselves and concerning ourselves so much with warmth and cold, etc. The essence of the Gita was, I had noticed, Samatva—i. e., equanimity; and its practical teaching is to make me get hardy and strong-minded enough not to care for heat, warmth or cold, etc. So next morning, despite the cold, myself and friends did not cover the upper portion of our body. Baba was not physically present at the dawn *arati*. At *pravachan* time, he began his words thus: "Now that you are acting up to my advice, I shall proceed to give you further directions and advice." I found that we had understood him aright and that he was watching us and our progress with ever wakeful omnipresent eyes.

One of my friends, Raghunath Bhat, had many sorrows. He would go to Baba for relief but do nothing more. He continued in distress and would not appeal to Baba —but shed tears. On one occasion he placed his head on Baba's feet and Baba remarked; "Get away. By your placing your head on my feet you cause me needless trouble. Why do you trouble me? I would prefer to be without this trouble. Why do you come to me?" B—Bai, a revered lady friend of ours, a month later when I and she were together, raised the question (in Baba's absence, in one of the Zopdi front rooms) what Baba meant by the above words. I interpreted them thus. R. B. has his sorrow. Baba loves him, feels for him, and wishes to help him. But unless R. B. makes a personal appeal to Baba and places himself thus *en rapport* with Baba or, to speak metaphorically, opens a connection drain to connect his little gutter with the big drainage gutter of Baba, he cannot get his grief to flow away from him into Baba. Baba felt this and felt it mortifying to see that R. B. needed this relief and that yet he would not make the personal appeal —i.e., take the requisite step. Next morning Baba addressing me and others said, "Why should you try to make people understand when they will not understand, when they will not see things with their third eye and hear with their third ear. Let them suffer if they will not thus try to understand." I found he referred to my previous night's effort to explain R.B.'s real position with Baba and his (R.B.'s) failure to take the needed step.

On one occasion as I sat before Baba with others, a thought came to my mind which was inconsistent with the reverence I owed to him.—I woke to the situation at once and queried within myself, "How and whence comes this wicked thought that conflicts with the reverence due to Baba? Baba at once spoke and said as though making some general remark: "What, when the room is cleaned and swept, some dust is brought by the wind and goes away with the wind." That meant that (if not acquiesced in) this does not matter. Again on another occasion, I had a doubt. "Baba is the 'pure infinite mind in which there is no restlessness, no activity. Our finite minds send out their little ripples of thought and Baba's perfect, passive, infinite mind catches each ripple, reflects it and deals with it. But does the infinite trace each ripple to its source and see which man's or woman's mind sends it? Is that possible?"

Baba then spoke generally and said, "What? Some one gives me a cocoanut, one a plantain and another a guava and I receive all and put them by. Do I bother myself to note who gave which?" This shows he accepts the presented thoughts and takes the necessary action without attending to and noting which person presented. So I was glad to note his immediate response to my query.

In 1927, he told me not to go to him unless I felt a particular and distinct call to go and see him (and that he would be with me always). I have, therefore, not seen him since then at Sakuri or Bombay or anywhere else. **But I enjoy his continual protection and care. I make appeals to him and he answers, i.e., the response is evident.** Except in rare cases the responses have always come and they come in the shape of the help craved for by me. I shall give three instances.

Though I have a large practice, I do not send out bills but leave it to the goodness of my patients not to pay or to pay what they deem fit. On one occasion house rent was due and on the following day the rent collector would have to be faced. Vexed as I was with my inability to meet the expected demand, I went before Baba's picture and thus addressed him. "You are in the rent-collector. If you want me to run away hence, then I will do it. I do not wish to go and borrow. If you want me to continue here, send me money." Before the rent-collector arrived, a rich client of mine whom I treated six years previously came up and paid me Rs. 50. I had given up any expectation from that quarter. With surprise I received money, thanked Baba for it and paid the rent. Another occasion was exactly similar to the above and then I made the same appeal and had the same result.

In serious cases of treatment also, I have appealed to Baba. One man seemed to sink and I appealed to Baba thus; "You have brought this patient to me. Is it to let the man die under my treatment? It is yours to save him if you think fit." The man rallied. Many other cases of the same sort I have had. Very exceptionally the appeal failed and I felt sure that there must have been special reasons for the failure.

In the case of a boy Balkrishna, his teachers refused to send him up for the public examination. His elder brother would not go up and see the concerned authorities. At the mother's (*i e.*, B—Bai's) entreaty, I took up the uncongenial task as the bidding of Baba and went to the school. The Principal said rather roughly that he did not like to be troubled abot sending up boys. Then he saw my visiting card and became more polite. But still he said that sending the boy up would necessitate the sending up of four more boys of his (useless) sort—who were all in one lot. I simply said, "If you can send him without hurting your conscience, please do. If not let the result be as God pleases", and came away. I felt that Baba had sent me on the business and evidently Baba did not want me to succeed. Next day I was surprised to get a letter from the Principal apologising for his rudeness to me and the boy was selected and sent up for the examination. I felt that Baba's grace must have worked up this result. There are various cases of this sort, each perhaps in itself inconclusive but the cumulative effect of which must convince a fair-minded observer that Baba's divine influence is beneficent, all-pervasive and powerful.

No. 15

16TH JANUARY 1934 SAKURI.

Mr. Shiva Rao, Retired Government Telegraphist, now Sri Sadananda Saraswathi, Parekh House, New Queen's Road, Bombay, states:—

I was one of the very fiirst to go to Baba. I had seen Sri Sai Baba once. He impressed me greatly by his very appearance. I knew H. S. Dixit. At his and Dabolkar's, I had derived good impressions of Sai Baba. Later I saw Sri Upasani Baba—first in 1923. I was told he was a *Satpurusha*. I was one of the first saraswaths from Bombay, I believe, to get to him. Dr. Komberbail had precedcd me, asking me to follow, as I could not get leave (to go with him) from telegraph department. When I was to start from Bombay, I asked my wife for money for trainage, etc. She first objected on the ground that it was waste of money which she could invest in making a good jewel but finally gave it. I reached Sakuri and saw Baba at his Zopdi (cottage). I did not inform him of the talk or difficulty at home. But of his own accord in his talk addressed to the people present (among whom I was one), he spoke as though in general terms and said, "Why should any come here to see me spending valuable money? That money could be saved and invested in making a jewel for the wife," etc. I felt that he was aware of what took place at my house and referred thus to my wife's views and objections. Dr. Komberbail was present when Baba spoke and I informed Dr. Komberbail about the talk between my wife and me.

My cousin Ramakrishna Rao, the artist, had a series of misfortunes and calamities. His wife and baby took ill. Leaving Bombay he went to Devlali as an excellent place for the recoupment of the wife's health but the valuable jewels and *sadis* left behind in

Bombay were stolen away. He was sorely depressed. I took him to Baba, mentioned his sorrows and said that he wanted to know if the lost articles would be recovered. Baba said, "What I gave I have taken back. Why does he worry himself about it?" Asked if his child would recover, Baba replied that he was not an astrologer to speak to that, but that everything would happen in accordance with R's *prarabdha* or *poorva karma*; he should never vex himself with the matter. He derived no satisfaction from these answers. His property was not recovered. The child died in a few months' time and his wife died some two years after he asked Baba about her. A year after that R's own health gave way and he became weaker and weaker till at last he could not walk. Pernicious anaemia the doctor called it but could find no cure. I asked him to trust entirely to Baba for a cure. But he could not summon enough faith in Baba; He is slightly improving and is now walking with the help of a stick or two used like crutches.

No 16

1st March 1934, Sakuri

Mr. Kaikhkhushroo D. Bajan, Proprietor, Lime Factory, Katni, aged 51, states:—

Having heard much of the remarkable personality of Sri Upasani Baba, I took the opportunity at Surat a year and a half back and saw him for the first time in June 1932. He told me to continue my religious practice as before (without inquiring what it was), "only," he added, "do not forget God." In August following, I went to Sakuri and saw him. I wished to take a photograph of him. He first declined to permit it, but finally gave me the permission. I took a photograph then of Baba. I was looking at it off and on for nine months and found nothing extraordinary. After that period, I discovered that on the breast of Baba was the figure of Sri Krishna with four arms (two lifted up). My friends also to whom I showed the picture recognised that figure.

In October 1932, we had to open new accounts on Dipavali day. So I wrote to Baba and requested him to send us something for the occasion. He sent us *tulasi* leaves, *i. e.*, sacred basil. I still preserve those leaves as a sacred memento. They still retain their fragrance.

In November 1932, I re-visited Sakuri and attended the marriage of the Panchakanyas. I took a dozen snapshots then, in two of which Baba sat with the Panchakanyas. When I printed these photos, I noticed that in the two wherein Baba sat with the Panchakanyas (1) the letters SADHU were clearly visible on his breast, *i. e.*, amidst the hair covering his breast, and (2) there was a tiny bust of Sri Krishna at his throat. The other ten photographs of Baba taken at the same time, with the same camera and set of films, did not disclose any such letters or figure. How these came in at all or only in these two photos, I cannot explain. Evidently they must be due to Baba's miraculous power. Sri Baba has been protecting me and my relations ever since we went to him.

(1) My nephew's little son also took darsan of Baba along with us. He has been miraculously helped or saved several times since then. Once when he was 7 to 8 months old, he had been placed on a high bedstead and the mosquito curtains had been carefully tucked up all round the child. A little later the child was found lying on the ground below the bedstead. The child of itself could not have moved out of the bedstead. On a later occasion, the child was similarly protected by curtains and also by pillows. During the night the child's pillow was seen to be missing and was found far away on a table· How it got there none could guess. Next morning the child was free

from the cough he had the previous days. Some six months ago, a motor door was suddenly closed and the child's toes being caught thereby, he roared with pain. The mother of the child could not pull off the toes till the motor door was opened. In five minutes we drove home and found the child was safe and happy; there was not a scratch or the slightest hurt to the child. All these are evidently due to Baba's grace.

(2) Again about November 1932, our factory was in financial difficulty; the lime pits were full of water which had to be pumped out There was no way of raising or getting funds for pumping the water and digging out the lime quarry. I came to Baba and told him of the facts and prayed for help. Baba said, "What can I do? I will pray to God to help you." In the next month I blew Baba's *udhi* in to the well and prayed for help and the water was baled out, the quarries dug and the product readily sold. Ever since that time business for my firm is prosperous though others complain that trade is dull. Somehow money is flowing in whenever needed.

"I have stated all this voluntarily—as it is my duty to Baba and to humanity which may, like me, derive similar benefit."

7TH MARCH 1938, SAKURI

On 8-3-1936 I was driving my car on the road from Jubbalpore to Katni. In the car was a lad of fourteen, an old lady of seventy-three and an old gentleman of sixty-two years. On the way, there was a culvert. As I neared it, a bull came up from the opposite side and suddenly stood in the middle of the road and over the culvert. There was not sufficient space between the bull and either of the parapet walls of the culvert for a car to pass through. I could not stop the car. I tried to avoid the bull and turned my car to the left. The car dashed against the parapet wall and knocked off four of the stones therein, throwing them to a distance of some 20 feet. The car was greatly damaged. The front glasses, the side screens were all broken and torn to pieces. The car then was turned slightly towards the centre of the roadside and capsized. It fell on one side. All of us that were in the carriage, tumbled round ourselves and I had to open the sliding top to get out. The car, as it came off the parapet wall, turned so gently that none of us got any wounds or injury. Our safety was a marvel, and I Think it was due to Baba's grace.

No 17

Jehangir Moos, aged about 35, of Bombay, says:—

I have had one among other experiences with Baba, which may perhaps be interesting. Some years back I went at night *arati* time to Baba's residence and while there, it was whispered that Baba was ill and I regretted it was not part of my good fortune to render any physical help to him in his illness. *Arati* over, I went back to the temple upstairs and lay there. An hour later came a quite unexpected call from Baba. So I went up to his residence. Seeing me, he said that he was unwell and wanted me to feel his pulse. I felt the pulse and found nothing wrong, *i e.*, so far as I could say. I could not make out why I had been sent for. After a few minutes' stay I went back to room. Then I remembered that during *arati* I had a passing thought of Baba's illness and my lack of opportunity to serve him. It was evidently this thought that made Baba (who read my mind of course) so very kind as to send for me and give me the opportunity I desired.

No. 18

28TH MARCH 1934. SAKURI

Raghunathabhat, clerk in a firm, Bombay, says:—

I have known Sri Upasani Baba for the last twelve years. I bought his life in Mahratti by Nath Madhao and my wife would read out portions of it to me. One day when my little infant daughter Devi* was ill, Dr. Komberbail, our family friend, attended. He read the book and told us that Sri Upasani Baba was a *Satpurusha* and that he was living at Sakuri and worth a visit. Not very seriously—rather sportively, I made the offer, that if by the *Satpurusha*'s blessing the child should improve that very night, we would go on pilgrimage to Sakuri. The child did improve that night, and we had to fulfil our vow. My wife and child accompanied by Dr. Komberbail started first, and I later, after duly obtaining leave from my firm, to Sakuri.

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* Devi recently married (spiritual union) to Upasani Baba.

When I arrived at that place, I found my wife's face discolored and cut by exposure to cold. There was no accommodation for visitors for boarding and lodging—except in a cow-stall. I thought it was not worth while visiting a Satpurusha, suffering such serious discomfort.

When I went into Baba's low and dingy hut, I could hardly make out where he was. Yet, soon I saw him; but what I saw was not his actual figure but the form of my family guru. Struck with wonder and great reverence, I bowed at his feet and was quivering with fear. He patted me on the back kindly and said "Do not fear." Thenceforward my trust and faith in him increased rapidly and I placed myself and my family under his protection unreservedly.

Dr. Komberbail and his friends (Gopal Rao and others) had wonderful experience with Baba; these were communicated to us and strengthened our faith in Baba.

Before leaving Baba, I told him what was essential for my temporal and spiritual welfare. I was too much the slave of the Grand Passion, i.e., sex; and I wished to overcome its tyranny, and craved for his help. I also told him that myself and wife were a team drawing the cart of my family (samsara). that my children were its wheels and that he (Baba) should take up the responsibility of being its driver to ensure our reaching the goal safe. Baba laughed and said that no other had preferred to him such a novel request. He did not,decline to take up the responsibility, however.

When we were to stay away, he detained my wife; and for nearly one year she remained at Sakuri. I was sending her all things required and visiting Sakuri almost every week. After sometime, Baba objected and bade me not to visit Sakuri so frequently.

I was always very lavish in my expenditure. Baba was displeased with that. He told me he would make me beg. I retorted that I would beg if he made me beg. In a month of this threat, our Bombay branch received notice from the head office in England that our company closed its business. I was then at Bombay. The loss of employment was a serious blow to me. I did not communicate the news either to Baba or to my wife, who was at Sakuri. But so keenly did I feel the loss that one midnight I got up and went to Baba's photograph and in wild grief poured out my entreaties to him that he should protect my wife and children. I cried and cried till I forgot where I was or what I was doing. This was in my room at Bombay.

The next morning at Sakuri, Baba sent for my wife from her quarters there and asked her severely what I (her husband) meant by disturbing his sleep all night with cries. "He will not let me sleep. He is shouting 'Baiko Poreko Sambala', i.e., save my wife and children. My wife knowing nothing of the loss of my employment could make out nothing.

Some days later, I went to Sakuri and she then told me of the above complaint of Baba that I thus disturbed his rest.

When I went to Baba he himself asked me what happened to my job. As he knew all, I did not give him a direct answer. I told my wife also that as he is God, she need not and should not tell him anything. He knows everything and will provide what, in his view, we ought to get.

Sometime later, Baba asked me and my wife to go away from Sakuri. We went to Bombay. One of my brothers, and later, a friend offered to help us with funds. We declined all help. It was for Baba and for him alone to give us food and help. We starved ourselves and gave the children something of what they used to have. Later I sent away my wife to her relations. I remained at Bombay. I starved practically the whole of six months at Bombay and then went to Sakuri. As soon as I arrived, Baba sent me fruits. I tried to borrow a stove and cook some rice (conjee) gruel. Baba sent for me and for the ladies in charge of the Khanawala and asked the latter to feed me. He referred to the fact that I had starved for months at Bombay and that he was feeling it keenly. Baba, though not informed by me of the fact, knew of it, of course.

There was one very noticeable instance of Baba's powers and kindness during my wife's long stay at Sakuri. Our child (Devi) took ill one day. Pursuant to my instructions, she did not inform Baba of the illness. When the fever went high, at night 11 p.m., she sat up weeping by the child's bedside. At that hour Baba turned up, inquired what the matter was and chid her for not informing him. He then applied *Udhi* (Sacred ashes) to the child's forehead and gave *thirtha*. Next day the child was better.

In my extravagance, I had accumulated debts exceeding Rs. 2,000. Baba though not informed of it by me knew of it. My son had to get his sacred thread ceremony performed. If I performed it at Bombay or amidst my relations in the usual course, there would have been great difficulty to get funds and debts would be ruinously increased. Baba, in his kindness, had the ceremony performed at Sakuri and bore the expenses himself. He would not allow me to make the usual purchases for presents or preparations. How kind and thoughtful of him!

When I got a job, Baba told me to put by a definite portion to pay my debts and made me clear off those debts.

Two years ago, when I had no job, I was serving the Sakuri Ashram and colony in every capacity, (e.g.. sweeping etc.). I was informed of a job and I went up and secured one on Rs. 175 per mensem. Immediately going to Sakuri I went and bowed to Baba. He then said, "Here is just received your wife's letter" and showed it to me. There she complained that her lot had become unendurable and prayed to him (Baba) to provide help for us. We are all marionettes in Baba's hand. He plays with us and looks after us.

No 19

8TH SEPTEMBER 1934, SAKURI

Dass Rati, Brahmin, aged above 30, Govt. employee in Bombay says:—

I came to Baba first in 1924. I have already joined my office in 1922 as a clerk. Almost the first thing Baba told me was to marry. I did so long after that, in 1930. I got faith in Baba and had his picture either on the wall opposite to my chair or on my table. I used to gaze at his picture before going to sleep. He would often appear in my early morning dreams and tell me things. They all came true. There were some 15 or 20 or even more of such instances. I have had these dreams in 1924-26. After that I did not get such visions and true dreams often. Occasionally I got truths disclosed to me in dreams even after that,—for example, in 1930 just before my marriage. I had always set my face against marriage. But one night (it was 15 days before my marriage), I found the name (with father's surname) of a girl appearing before me and I was told in that dream vision that I was going to marry her. But when I woke up, I was unwilling to marry her. I told none of it. But a few days after the dream my mother mentioned her name and mooted the marriage proposal. I refused to listen to her. An intimate friend of mine came and mooted the same proposal again and again. I refused to agree. Then, my maternal uncle, a big rich man, sent for me and asked me to agree to the proposal. I wanted to decline it, but some inexplicable thing stopped my saying "No" and I took time till next day to give my reply. Next day I thought over it and agreed. These experiences were frequent in 1924-26. On one occasion I was going hopefully to enter on a financial enterprise. Baba appeared in a vision and said that I was not going to succeed. When I went out and tried to start it, I found unexpectedly that Baba's statement proved true. In other cases also Baba gave me an inkling as to what was going to happen, e.g., which horse would win a race on a particular day. But somehow I failed to take full advantage of the predictions he gave me. It was all probably for my spiritual advantage that I failed. Anyhow my faith in Baba became firmer. I used to get and am still getting premonitions and mental suggestions as to what is to happen and these turn out true. These, I believe, are due to Baba's grace. Some mysterious hints as to coming events that I got about Baba (and I believe from Baba) I will mention by way of illustration. One day when I desired to start for Sakuri from Bombay, several hindrances prevented me and I sat dejected at my table and gazed on Baba's picture and then bowed down. Then I saw garlands falling from Baba's picture on to the table and found they were 13 in number. I noted the number 13 and carefully preserved the garland I gave to Baba's picture every Thursday thereafter. On the 12th Thursday, Baba had come to Bombay and I went with my 12th garland to him. He received others' garlands, but mine he returned to me. The next day I took another garland to him. That was the thirteenth. I told him nothing of my vision and the I3 garlands. This thirteenth garland he received and wore. So this was the meaning of the vision, I found.

At one time, greatly disgusted with life, I was considering why it should not be ended and why I should have all the trouble I had. I went to sleep and woke up early morning with a dream vision in which some one robed in white came to me and said " अधश्चमूलान्यनुसंततानि कर्मानुवंधीनि मनुष्यलोके || which means "its roots (i.e., roots of the tree of Samsara or phenomenal existence) have spread below into this earth, in this world of men binding them by their (*Karma*) action," and it was also mentioned that this was in Chapter XV of Bhagavad Gita. I had not previously read Gita. I woke up repeating those words and looked up the Gita for the passage and its explanation.

I found there the solution to the problems vexing me. My karma had to be worked out by life on this earth and I could not escape it by trying to cut short this life. Though the white-robed figure did not appear to be Baba, yet as I had no other God or Guru or force moving me except Baba, I put it down as due to Baba's grace that I got a solution of my difficulties in this way.

Even in my non-spiritual or rather worldly and material longings and efforts I used to get premonitions. Such premonitions decrease with the increased indulgence in vice but yet do not desert me wholly. Baba's grace is shown not merely to wholly virtuous people but to sinners also.

No. 20

1934

Srimati Laxmibai of Hyderabad, (wife of Mr. Balkrishna, Retired Talukdar and 1st Class Magistrate), says:—

I have been taking ill off and on. Six months back, one day at about noon, when I was unwell, in the solitude of my room and was feeling a sinking sensation—as though I was about to die, Baba suddenly appeared in the room on the very cot I lay on and said, "Do not be afraid," and disappeared. At once I felt better.

Day before yesterday was Ganapati Pooja. I finished that Pooja in my room and went to see Baba. I saw him, but saw him as the moon— a bright moon.

Six years ago, while at Sakuri I had shooting pains in my back and I could not lie on my back. So I sent my daughter, a girl of ten, to Baba to get some sacred *tirtha* from him, i.e., water in which his feet had been washed. The girl went and stood before Baba, but said nothing at all—even though Baba asked her what she came for. Baba at once washed his feet with some water and sent that *tirtha* to me through her.

No. 21

1934

C. Sri Krishna, Bar-at-Law of Hyderabad, at Sakuri says:—

I had the following directly from Deshpande of Kolhapur. He went to Gangapur to worship at the famous shrine of Datta there. After two months' worship he had a dream in which he was simply directed thus. "Go to a Nanga", (i.e., a naked person). But no details or specification of the *Nanga* (i.e., naked saint) being given, he did not know whom to go to. The next day, he had a dream in which full details were given to him—"Go to Upasani Baba at Sakuri, via. Chitali" and he was further directed in the dream to go and do pooja and bhajan at Sakuri and fast for 24 days. The man went to Sakuri and did pooja only for a time and went afterwards to have an interview with Baba. He never told Baba about his dreams and the directions he had received. But Baba of his own accord asked him to do bhajan at the Mandir and fast all the time. He went on with bhajan and fast for 23 days. On the 24th day he felt too faint to stand as he should, while doing bhajan at the Datta Mandir. Then he recollected that in the dream he had been ordered to fast only 24 days and found that he had been enabled to keep up his energy just that period, while observing a full fast. The wonder was how the second dream came to supplement the first by specifying Sri Upasani Baba as the Nanga to go to; and how Baba when consulted, without being told of the details of the order in the dream, exactly prescribed that portion of that order which he had not carried out,—namely, bhajan and fast, and how exactly on the 24th day his fast had automatically terminated.

No 22

Statement of N. Engineer. Mofussil, Bombay, 1932:—

N. :—Swamiji, you are wasting time in attending to other things. Go and see Sri Upasani Maharaj at Sakuri without delay.

Swami:—Why? Can you give me any idea of His greatness or nature from your personal knowledge?

N.:—Yes. I have personal knowledge of his greatness and goodness. I shall cite only two instances however to convince you. Sometime back, I had some funds with me and an intimate friend or two invited me to join them in starting a business in partnership. I was to supply funds, my credit and my special knowledge; they would run the business and we would all share the profits. I agreed. I never cared to look into accounts. I trusted my friend implicitly and delivered to him blank cheques signed by me to be used for the business. The business seemed to be profitable; but suddenly my partners declared that it turned out a loss; and I agreed to withdraw from the business without getting back any of the money I invested, which was in fact the whole amount of my savings. My misfortunes did not stop there. Soon after my withdrawal, I had a demand from a firm to pay up two thousand and interest, due on a cheque for Rs. 2000 which was stated to have been issued by me. I had given them no such cheque and I declined to pay. A suit followed and I engaged the services of an eminent lawyer to defend the suit. We went to court and saw the cheque. There was my signature on it staring me in the face. That was evidently how my partner had used my blank cheque. A decree, I was advised, would follow as a matter of course. I had not, however, a single rupee to pay up any such decree. In despair I cast my eyes in all directions for help. But there was none to help. I went in deep dejection to Sakuri to meet Sri Upasani Maharaj in whom I had great faith. I narrated to him my tale of woe. He said, "You have not acted unrighteously. Do not be afraid. I am with you." After a very short stay I returned. I had perfect confidence in Baba's miraculous powers of affording relief, though I did not know what shape the relief would take. The decree was passed against me as expected. Sometime thereafter when I met my lawyer he asked me to buy for him a second-hand an excellent motor car with up-to-date improvements; and in a very short time thereafter a rich friend of mine told me that his thriftless relative had brought a first class car for over ten thousand rupees from a Bombay company, that after six months' use had left it in his hands and that he would be glad to get rid of that white elephant somehow. I induced him to give it to me for Rs. 2,500 and with some reluctance he agreed. I then took it to the lawyer and got Rs. 5,000 for it netting a difference of Rs. 2,500 which just enabled me to meet the decree debt. Later another cheque for Rs. 900 was sprung upon me by another firm with a demand for payment. That was another blank cheque I had the folly to sign. A similar unexpected "wind-fall" (as others would call it) put just enough money into my hands to meet that claim. Others may call these windfalls. But these are really the gracious gifts of Baba to help his devotee in distress. You can form some idea from these of his greatness and goodness, I believe.

No. 23

A reliable gentleman known to B. V. N. Swami says as follows:—

He is and has always been a bachelor. He has sown his wild oats up to a very recent period. He had his operation for hydrocele and hernia about 1½ years back. Soon after meeting Baba, he confessed to him his weakness and prayed Baba that he should be freed from the terrible power of the sex urge. Some time thereafter, the sex urge practically left him. Even when tempted, he is now able to withstand the temptation.

No. 24

1934

Jehangir Nallaseth, age 34, Weaving Master, Bombay, states:—

When I was in Bombay, my little son Dara, a few months old baby, was constantly getting fever. I would note the temperature with the thermometer and call for a doctor. But each time when the doctor attended, the temperature would be normal and the doctor would find nothing wrong with the child. But as soon as the doctor went away, fever would appear. I asked the doctors what sort of disease this could be and what was to be done to cure it. They were puzzled, doubted if there was any disease and could not help me. Some friends said that this was a case of sorcery, that relief could not be had at the hands of doctors, and that relief could only be given by a *Satpurusha*. A lady friend told my wife that one of her family had some trouble, that Sri Upasani Baba of Sakuri was approached and that relief was obtained. So myself and wife came with our child, then 18 months old, to Sakuri, merely bowed at Sri Upasani Baba's feet, attended the *aratis* and told him of our trouble. As advised, we merely applied his *udhi* and gave his *tirtha* to the child, and continued to stay on doing seva and attending *aratis*, etc., i.e.. following the customary observances of the Ashram. The fever never appeared at Sakuri. We wanted to go away after one year but on Baba's advice we have continued to live here for over three years with occasional breaks. Dara has grown strong and vigorous and has not had any illness at all. Black magic, sorcery and all works of the devil seem to be powerless in Baba's presence.

No. 25

22ND NOVEMBER, 1934, SAKURI

Statement of Mr. Sagunrai C. Metha, B. Com., Brahmin, Auditor of Co-operative Societies, Dhond Division at Sadashivpeth, Poona, aged about 35:—

In 1930, I was living at Villeparla and my neighbour was Mr. Kothari, Barrister, a staunch devotee of Sri Upasani Baba. In his bungalow daily *aratis* and occasional *sapthas* of Baba were going on, with great eclat—but I took no notice of them. Before Gurupoornima of that year my only daughter, Kokila, aged about 10, fell ill. I tried Ayurveda and Allopathy—Vaids and Doctors. The illness extended over 40 days and was getting more and more serious. The temperature went upto 105 or 106 and could not be brought down. The patient was reduced to a skeleton with boils all over the body—blood oozing out of some of them. The doctors could not even agree as to the diagnosis. One termed it typhoid, another pneumonia and third bronchitis, etc. Despite numerous injections, she showed no signs of improvement. The base was evidently considered hopeless—beyond the reach of medicine. One day the noise of *saptha* at Mr. Kothare's was, I feared, harmful to her and I sent him a letter requesting him to minimise the noice and he very kindly acceded to the request. Next day, a new moon day (particularly inauspicious to the sick) feeling intensely the hopelessness of the situation, I went out of my bangalow, sat at the foot of a tree and shed tears. Mr. Kothari came up and made kind enquiries. Noting the desperate situation, he asked me whether I would object to Baba's *udhi* and *tirtha* being now tried—as medical help was of no avail. Though I had known nothing of Baba, I naturally had no objection and readily consented. Mr. Kothare came and applied *udhi* and *tirtha* of Baba to the patient all over—especially to the boils. My daughter felt better; the application, she felt, was cool, soothing and refreshing. Next day, the temperature fell to 103, the third day to 101, and on the 4th, it reached normal. All these days we had applied only *udhi* and *tirtha* and stopped all other treatments. As the patient's temperature gradually fell, the faith of myself and my wife in Baba steadily rose. Within a fortnight the patient regained health and began to put on some flesh.

A month or two later, Baba came to Bombay and stayed at Mr. Govindadas' bungalow "Tara Nivas" at Walkeshwar. We went and saw him. There was a huge crowd of thousands streaming before him from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m., merely bowing and passing on—just as in a levee. In that stream we saw him in our turn at about 5 or 6 p.m. Just as the crowd was dispersing Baba was about to get up and we went in. Baba, tired out though he was, welcomed us cordially. Though none introduced us to him or told him who we were, what experiences we had or whether there was any illness, etc., he himself pointed to my daughter and asked "How is her health now?" I answered that she was doing well. Baba then said that trouble or sorrow was of two sorts, one clearly traceable to our own fault or karma, the other, not so traceable. The second sort was really a God-send, though of course the result of our past karma. Such trouble must be manfully faced and utilised to link ourself with God—completely resigning ourself to His mercy and to His will. Then the trouble proves to be a blessing and a sure-way to secure salvation. It is sorrow or pain that drives us to God. Such were his words and he closed the interview by inviting us to visit him at Sankaranti. We gladly accepted the invitation and promised to visit him at Sakuri.

When Sankaranti came, a visit was by no means easy,—for we had our problems to face. My wife was *enciente*—six months with child. It was just at such a period that she had miscarried on previous occasions. The doctor's advice was to avoid all travel, by train, by cart or by motor. But Mr. Kothare asked us to put our trust in Baba, start and keep our promise. This view prevailed and we left Bombay for Sakuri. There was much jolting in the motor journey from Chitali station to Sakuri. On the night of our arrival my wife was experiencing sharp pains. A little later, there was a bloody discharge, with high fever; and then she very nearly fainted. There was no medical help at hand. I went to Baba with tears and told him of our piteous plight. Baba instead of reassuring me, himself began to cry and shed tears. He was kindness incarnate. He told me that in this existence, this vale of tears, it was always like this; that the root cause of my trouble was the past karma of another soul which had its *Rinanubhanda*, i.e.. old scores to clear with others; that the soul had its *Papa Pinda* i.e.. little fund of evil karma to be wiped out; consequently it came now into the womb causing immence suffering to itself, to the parents, and all concerned, and quickly exhausted its karma thereby or by a life of a few hours on earth; that the soul had, on the other hand, its (*Punya Karma*) good karma to reap the benefit of and consequently comes into birth and gets its death at the feet of a *Satpurusha* gaining salvation for itself thereby. This explanation of the spiritual reasons for my trouble gave me a little solace, but soon recalling the grave situation of my wife, I asked what was to be done for her. Then he gave me a quantity of his *udhi*, and asked me to use the same externally and internally. I took the *udhi* and put some of it into my wife's mouth. Some of the ladies here kindly came to assist her. The foetus, the placenta and all accumulated black clots (for which previously the doctors had advised an operation) were expelled without trouble; and though there were no sanitary appliances or arrangements to prevent sepsis, etc., no complications ensued. In four days my wife safely tided over the crisis and gained sufficient health to enable us to leave Sakuri.

Incidents like these gave a great impetus to me to place my entire trust in Baba. His photograph in my house was the chief object of my worship. In its presence I have always felt great reverence and awe. For example, an old intimate friend came to me after an absence of many years in foreign lands and in offering him a smoke, I took him away from the room in which Baba's picture was placed. When he asked for the reason, I showed him Baba's photograph and mentioned the great reverence in which I held Baba and my reasons therefor. Baba has told me that I should not without sufficient cause or justification tom-tom my relations with him or facts of his greatness. But the need to explain things to an intimate friend was a sufficient cause, and that friend has since then joined the ranks of our devotees.

As I was frequently repeating the *arati* in praise of Baba and daily meditating on him, he began to appear in my dreams and even to communicate things to me in the dreams. Such dream visions have become very frequent now and occur atleast every alternate night. Latterly the visions of and inspirations from Baba are not confined to dreams. They sometimes occur in the waking state. Sometimes it is hard for me to say whether I am having the experience in dream or in the waking state. The two states get so intermixed (with me) sometimes.

Such experiences are not mere matters of psychological interest to me. They have (coupled of course with communication made to me by Baba when I visit him in person) so radically changed my outlook—nay my very nature. Things which I would have formerly pooh-poohed as impossible changes in me have actually taken place. Though the spiritual seeds (*samskaras*) must have already existed in me, they are having a remarkably exuberant growth—though the full fruit is not in sight. I have no intention of taking to *nivritti marga*, at any rate, till my life should come in to "the sere, the yellow leaf." But after getting to see Baba, I felt strangely attracted to him, and to his teachings. He teaches us that all existence is full of misery; that we have no abiding city here; that we must rivet our attention on the future and see that this vicious chain of births and deaths is cut off as early as possible; that in all our actions we should take care not to increase or perpetuate our *samsara*; that, for instance, in the matter of sex-enjoyment, we should limit it to the production of one or at the most two children; that thereafter husband and wife must live together and love each other like brother and sister, and that thereafter a wife has to be persistently regarded as given to one—not as a source of carnal pleasure but—purely as a means of exercising virtues which lead both Godward. It is not in sex matters alone that he insists on abstinence and self-control. He exhorts us to exercise self-denial and self-control in respect of all enjoyments. His personal talks have such purifying power, such a charm, supported as they are by the inspiring example he himself sets and by his kindly interest in our welfare which leads him to keep an eye on all our movements, that they change our nature entirely. He is self-control incarnate. Lust and greed have no place in him, whatever uninformed and malignant writers may say to the contrary in their private talk or public writings and proceedings. All that campaign of calumny and vilification can easily be met by the unerring and unanswerable logic of facts. A tree is known by its fruits. A corrupt tree bringeth not forth good fruit—nor a good tree corrupt fruit. By its fruits also you know whether the life of any particular saint is pure or vitiated by lust and greed. Those who have moved closely with Baba have become purer, less attached to woman, wealth and earthly objects, and got a distinct push upward in their spiritual course. He dins into our ears ever and anon that the world is putting us back and chaining us to itself and that those who look back and yield to its charms never get to God—no, never. Thus he weans away his devotees from worldly attractions, and from sense enjoyments and directs them to use their sorrows to confirm and strengthen their souls in their onward march to God. He does this in numerous ways peculiarly adopted to each devotee. I am compelled here—not as a matter of *self-laudation*, which I dislike and which Baba also warns me against as a serious obstacle to salvation, but—out of sheer love of truth to vindicate the ways of God to man and to mention some of my personal experiences so that my fellow-devotees and those who intend to approach Baba for their uplift need not be deterred by baseless calumnies.

Before I came to Baba, I was just like other ordinary respectable gentlemen, desiring to have a good time,—of course, without involving myself in sin or crime; and asceticism was very far from my thoughts. But as Baba showed himself to have such marvellous power of plucking my daughter almost from the jaws of death, of recognising her and referring to her deliverance, on the very first occasion when he saw her and me, of piloting my wife safely through the critical period of her miscarriage, and of giving us apt and striking truth about our past, present and future, we could not fail to perceive that we were before a great, powerful, and beneficent personality which was watching us with Argus-eyes, even when we were hundreds of miles away and which took such kindly interest in and showed such great concern for our temporal and spiritual welfare. I naturally surrendered myself entirely to his will and looked to him for guidance in affairs temporal and spiritual. All my meditation was on him. So probably to encourage and help me, I got his visions frequently in dreams, and later in waking life also. The instructions and directions he gave on these occasions were supplemented by long talks with him whenever I went to see him. And this I did often as my official division for years included areas round Sakuri.

All these directions and instructions are of importance, though varying in degree. It is not possible to recollect and narrate all of them; many of them were personal and private and cannot be communicated. Several bear upon my personal experiences. And one important future of Baba's teachings is his insistance on each devotee keeping his training and experience perfectly secret—except when occasion demands their disclosure. As such an occasion has now arisen, I will just narrate a very few of my experiences for the purpose above-mentioned.

To take small matters first, I had a foible, which it is needless now to describe. It was not looked down upon by many as anything wrong but it was distinctly against Baba's views and wishes. In 1932 I was at Sakuri and quite innocently indulging my foible—in front of the Zopdi, i.e., Baba's residence and far out of sight and hearing of Sri Baba. Just then I found that Baba was going on with a *pravachan* i.e., lecture inside the Zopadi. Baba's voice lures me at any moment and acts like the snake-charmer's music on the snake; and I ran up at once to drink in the nectar of his speech through my ears. What was my surprise to note that as I approached, he was addressing the audience apparently in general terms but in words which directly and exactly applied to me and to what I was just doing outside the Zopdi! "I wish to help my devotees," said he, "by remaining in their hearts. Whosoever wants me to be living in his heart must give up his foible (mentioning mine) and must give up his vices and make his heart a clean and fit place for me to occupy. But when I try to enter into their hearts, some scald and burn me by their foible. Especially in a Brahmin such a foible is worthy of severe condemnation," etc., etc., or words to such effect. I at once resolved upon amendment but did not quite succeed, as old habits are hard to shake off. Ten days later, when I was indulging my foible again at 6 a.m., on a road, I had a waking vision in which some one on horse back passed by me with those glittering eyes and piercing gaze, characteristic of Baba. He looked at me fiercely and passed on. I felt ashamed and bowed my head for hardly a minute and again lifted my head. Lo! the horse and horseman had vanished into thin air. The road was a long straight road the length of which he could not have covered within that minute. So I realised that this was a mysterious vision and the eyes and gaze convinced me that the rider was no other than Baba intent on driving all defects, foibles, and vices out of me for good. From that moment I shook off my foible and am perfectly free from it ever since.

In regard to my official duties and concerns, Baba has made my conscience very tender and I am getting very scrupulous not to violate the rights of the Government or the public in matters which I would formerly consider to be too trifling to require serious attention or to affect one's conscience, e. g.. in spending one's time and in the use of articles not belonging to me.

Passing on to religious matters, I have noted and practically adopted Baba's views on the question of *samsara*. Baba impresses on me and other devotees frequently what he said over and over in his Vaksudha and Sidhantharatnamala. In these days of loud outcry against increase of population and the consequent demand for State aid in sterilising vast masses of the male population and for the use of other contraceptive devices from purely material and economic considerations, many will appreciate Baba's view that the production of off-spring should be limited. But Baba is not for adopting mere physical or physiological devices preventing overproduction of human beings—as these will only debase people, that is, render them more reckless and sensual—and less *satvic*. His method is to check the passion in the heart by stern religious vows. For many years before and after marriage, husband and wife should observe strict Brahmacharya, i.e., abstinence and resolve to utilise their entire energy in devotion to God. Such an internal check will build up character by strengthening self-control and make the body healthier and stronger, the mind purer and more spiritual and the family happier here and hereafter. At the most, a child or two may be produced. In Sidhantharatnamala III 56, he points out that spiritually great persons have left no progeny. If they had children at all, these were very short-lived. Baba exhorts those who are attached to him to follow such examples; and gives them considerable assistance in achieving this object. In several cases his male and female devotees acting according to his advice have not married at all and spend their lives in purity and celibacy, though the marriageable age was reached long ago. In the case of the married, some devotees have lost their mates by death, disease, desertion, discord or friendly agreement for mutual separation and lead a pure godly life mostly or wholly at Sakuri under his benign care. In the case of some of these, though nominally leading a married life, they are helped to live pure celibate lives in various ways. By Baba's grace or interposition in some cases one or both become physically too weak, debilitated and sickly to lead a sexual life. In other cases where the devotees retain health, the taste for sex enjoyment has been rooted out by visions and instructions given in a most remarkable manner. This is not confined to sex attraction only. I shall illustrate this by reference to my personal experience.

By reasons of daily and constant meditation like several other devotees, I have been blessed by him with the gift of constantly seeing him wherever I may be. This is practically the most effective if not the highest cultural expedient or instrument available to us. Drawn by his powerful magnetism, we feel his words to us are in truth, words of power that not merely carry conviction but also arm us with power to feel and act as he directs. In his presence, either when we go to meet him or when he comes to us in dream visions or waking visions—nay, even in the presence of his portrait which we adore with almost as much regard as if it was his physical body, we dare not go against his views and directions. His presence in any of these forms inspires us with courage, resolution and power to live pure and holy lives. At times when natural cravings come upon me, I have proceeded towards some *Bhogya--Vastu* i.e., sense object, and at once I have seen his form—suddenly superposed on that object, or interposed between me and the object and there has been a sudden shock, a feeling of remorse and an utter disinclination to let the lower nature triumph any more over my principles and resolves. When I (or any other devotee in whom he takes such interest,—and their number is legion) go to meet him in person, he makes kind enquiries and notes what progress or retrogression has taken place. No professor, teacher, tutor, friend, guardian or parent has ever been taking such care or is able to take such care of us as Baba does. This pre-eminence of his is entirely due to his vast unbounded love and his wonderful powers, which may well be termed omniscience and omnipotence.

Instances of these powers have already been set out in what I have given above, but I shall cite one more before I close this account of his kind, all-seeing care and vast or miraculous powers exercised on our behalf.

Two years ago (i.e.. in 1932) my wife had various troubles and an eminent doctor of Bombay told me seriously that she suffered from advanced appendicitis and other trouble, that I should within 15 days get her first operated for appendicitis and then for another trouble and that if I fail to do so, sepsis and death were certain to follow. Fearing the great pain and risk of such operations, I was puzzled what to do and as Baba was our sole oracle, I went along with my wife to Sakuri. We went and stood along with others in a regular file—each waiting to take darshan of Baba in his or her turn. In that file Doctor Pandya of Umreth was standing before us with a bandage on his finger and he went and bowed to Baba first. Baba then enquired of him what the bandage on his finger was for. The doctor replied that he had just undergone an operation, and that the bandage was to prevent a relapse and the necessity for a fresh operation. Then Baba inveighed strongly against operation and said, "Yes, you cut out first one part, then the next, then the whole hand, then the arm; and lastly the whole body is cut up. You begin to operate for appendicitis, then cut up one portion, then another and then another. Away with all such operations! These diseases are the result of past *Karma*. Instead of undergoing operation, manfully face the pain and put yourself into the hands of God, and pray to him for such relief as He is pleased to give. In that way you get rid of your past *Karma* and avoid unnecessary molestation of the body. If an operation saves you this trouble at this time, your past *Karma* remains yet to be worked out and you are thrown into such other troubles later." These are not the exact words of Baba but these give the drift of what he said then and what he has often said to us and others. On this occasion he distinctly referred to appendicitis and the need for one operation after another, though Dr. Pandya had no appendicitis. These had obviously a reference to my wife's case and we took them to be the advice given to us. Baba acts like this very often. As he himself says often, he seldom gives direct advice to any one. Often what is intended for and beneficial to one is addressed to others or to the audience generally. We followed Baba's advice and avoided operation. Fifteen days passed away. The medical prophecy was not fulfilled. On the other hand, in two months time, my wife recovered her health without resort to any operation.

When I say that Baba is a *Satpurusha*, I mean that he is in the *sat-avastha* always, is a *sat-chit-ananda* in the flesh, that he is always in the state of realisation of the Self or *Paramathma* or *Parabrahma* —a *Jeevan-mukta*. If I am asked how others are to be convinced of this, my reply is how can the owl blinded by sun-light know the existence and nature of the Sun, and how can ordinary men, the men in the street, know of a person's realisation of *Parabrahma* any more than they can understand Einstein's theory of relativity. Such people must accept it as truth by direct faith in the Self-realiser or by great faith in some well-known and able disciple (of that Self-realiser) who will declare that his master is in that Self-realised or *Sat-chit-ananda* state. By reason of Vivekananda's declaration, people accepted the *Sat-chit-ananda* state of his master Ramakrishna Paramahamsa who did not trumpet out his own condition. Some disciple of Baba will rise and perform a similar service and make the world, i e., the common run of humanity, aware of Baba's state.

As for the hostile propaganda, Baba has been saying always that opponents and admirers are the complements of each other, and a Saint's *Poornavastha* takes in both with equal readiness, as equally necessary. This world of relative objects includes both light and shade, both good and evil. The one cannot exist or be understood or appreciated without the other. The *Poorna Purusha* welcomes both or is equally indifferent to both. Baba likens a *Satpurusha* to a stone. A dog comes and passes water on it. A washerman cleans his clothes on it. A devotee paints it with vermillion and worships it. Each gets the fruit of its or his action and the pleasure of serving the stone in its or his own way. Each may regard the others' use as wrong or foolish. But the stone is indifferent to all. The *Satpurusha's poorna-avastha* is well illustrated by the stone. This is Baba's point of view about the hostile propaganda* now in full swing. The admirers of Baba also though at first irritated by and disgusted with systematic vilification and slander, gradually begin to see that even these slanders by setting out Baba's *samatva*, really and ultimately serve to glorify Baba, i.e., to prove his *Sat-Avasatha* and thereby to increase and strengthen the faith of the devout in him.

No. 26

10TH NOVEMBER, 1936

Sakharam Hari Joshi, age 53, Brahmin, Kalyan, says:—

I have been for nine years a bhakta of Sri Upasani Baba. My wife and daughter, Mainabai, also are his bhaktas. From 1918 to 1923, I was in Hyderabad under a Jagirdarini, Gangabai. She kept my pay for some years 5 or 6 in arrears. So I left her service and joined Local Board service at Kalyan. Then I got into trouble about financial matters and I came to Sakuri in July 1935 and requested Baba to see if I could get my arrears from the Jagirdarini. Baba said, "Do not go. You will get nothing." Yet, on account of my difficulties, I did not wish to lose the chance of getting something. A trial costs nothing. So I went to Hyderabad and tried to call on her. But she was unwilling to face me and she left in a car—to return, —God knows when. So I came back, foiled in my attempt, to Sakuri. I stayed here 15 days.

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*i.e., since the end of 1932, when a great drop in the popularity of the Asram began.

I surrendered myself, when a warrant was being issued against me at Kalyan. A trial for embezzlement went on against me and I was sentenced on 28-2-1936 to 1½ years' rigorous imprisonment and Rs. 500 fine, with six months in default of payment.

When I was in Jail at Visapur, my daughter was living here at the Zopdi and my wife in the Dharamshala at Sakuri. Baba was moved to compassion. I learnt later on from my wife and daughter that Baba got performed some observances by my daughter and my wife at Sakuri in order to get me released early, and that he ordered my wife to go to see me in the jail. She came and saw me on 17-7-1936 at Visapur Jail. Before she came up, all the official people including the Doctor at Visapur were unfavourable to me and never sympathised with me. After my wife visited me, the doctor and other officials turned in my favour and the doctor, and later on, the Superintendent began to take interest in me. The doctor examined my eyes and urine and declared my case to be one of severe and hopeless jaundice. And he and others told me to apply for mercy (and release) to the Government on account of my hopeless case. I did apply in September last. Before my wife came, I had no idea that I had any disease. But on my application, orders were passed in about three weeks and I was unconditionally released. Rupees 500 fine which was imposed on me and which I was unable to pay was written off by Government.

As soon as I was released on 7-10-1936, I came straight to Sakuri. My daughter told me of the observances mentioned above and of the fact that in August, Baba had already told her that I would come back here to Sakuri very soon. Baba arranged for the whole current of events that led to my release in his own inscrutable and incomprehensible way and announced the result, while none could anticipate it.

ERRATA

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